

INTERNET

Teenagers use the Internet like the telephone of yesteryear

Kids use it for entertainment, education and communication and not necessarily in that order. In some ways chat rooms are like milk bars and hamburger places of the past where young people could spend time without adult interference. The Net itself is not to be feared but it can become a distorted reality of your young person spends all their waking hours online.



The much-publicised risk of predators is small compared with excessive use and the consequent isolation it can lead to.

WHAT'S THE ATTRACTION?

The Internet has a myriad of attractions to young people. It is instantaneous, highly-interactive and immensely private, which are highly prized attributes for most young people. It gives them access to their mates, music and media without leaving home. It has addictive qualities we know, but that doesn't mean that a young person should become a Net addict.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS REACT?

TREAT .COM RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES LIKE ANY OTHER.

Mocking their cyber friends and cyber activities can only drive them further into the cyber world of rebellion, and further away from the real world.

IF THE CYBER WORLD IS THE REAL WORLD for your young person as he shuns most other activities as well as people it may be time to take some action or even get some help.

INVOLVE YOURSELF IN THEIR CYBER ACTIVITIES, much as you would any other type of activity. Take the time to find out what they are doing and what they get from the activities.

NEGOTIATE ONLINE TIME ALLOCATIONS and share time online with other interested siblings. Locate the computer connected to the Internet in a public place at home so that you are accessible and also so sharing can occur.

ASK YOUR YOUNG PERSON WHAT A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME MAY BE ONLINE. If they violate that limit then ask them if they have a problem. Let them think it over for a time. Perhaps you can bargain real time activities in exchange for time online.

OFFER OFFLINE ALTERNATIVES TO ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION. Remind them that there are offline alternatives, even if they don't use them all the time.

KEEP IN MIND

1. Be mindful of your connection with your young person so encourage him or her to talk about their online life.

2. The Internet offers many opportunities for young people to connect with each other that wouldn't ordinarily do so. It is a very positive thing, however it is healthy to maintain a balance between online and offline activities and relationships.
3. Keep an eye on your child's Net life. Without being too pushy try to ascertain what they use the Net for and set some limits for its use, much as you would for the use of the television.



Parenting *ideas*
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