

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators background information on child development and personal safety. This information will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

### The Growing Personality...

- May start puberty
- Begin to develop a sense of who they are based on what they think vs. what others think
- Gain motivation internally, rather than just from friends or family
- Aware of social judgment
- Identity is still joined with parents and they can be easily embarrassed by their parents; however, at the same time they may seek a closer relationship with same-sex parent (only for a short time until adolescence when they tend to want to separate their identity from their parents)
- Increased interest in role models
- Increased body awareness (negative feelings about their bodies are common)
- Act very independent and self-assured
- Greater concern for right and wrong (people being treated fairly or unfairly)
- More capable of following rules without outside guidance; however, more capable of rationalizing breaking rules as they have more mature reasoning power
- Greater capacity for empathy
- Seek increased privacy as they have an increased need to start creating their own life
- Acquire pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, friendships, etc.)
- Continue to test parental limits through negative behaviour as it helps them learn appropriate behaviour
- Want to be considered grown-up, and often pressure parents to let them take on responsibilities they're not yet ready for

### What do children want to do? New Interests...

- Use instant messaging (MSN, Yahoo, AOL, etc.); chat with friends and others
- Use email
- Send pictures online
- Use Internet for research and search engines (Google, Yahoo, Dogpile, etc.)
- Go to music websites
- Use online games and diaries
- Seek increased independence: *bike riding, going to parks, walking to friends' houses, walking to and from school, shopping at the mall and skateboarding*
- Stay home alone for short periods
- Use cell phones
- Birthday parties
- Go out for Halloween with friends
- Sleepovers
- Extra-curricular activities



### Things to Consider...

- Reinforce that the Internet is a public place (like the store, the neighbourhood, the playground or going to someone's house) and set the expectation that you will monitor them online to increase their safety
- Reinforce household guidelines for Internet use and set limits on the amount of time spent online (Use filtering software)
- Help them find safe ways for privacy (offline diary, notebook, talk to friends face-to-face)
- Ensure that children are not communicating in chatrooms as they are typically unregulated
- Provide adult supervision for instant messaging (MSN, AOL, Yahoo, etc.), emailing, online games and their chat components (know and check regularly all children's contacts on their buddy lists)
- Explain to children that there is no need or urgency to respond to messages that they are sent. Teach children not to respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable, scared or unsure and to tell a trusted adult
- Know your children's passwords and screen names
- If exposed to inappropriate material online (sexually explicit, violent, etc.), teach them to tell a trusted adult
- Teach them to trust their instincts online and offline. Use "what if" scenarios\* to help them anticipate possible situations and practice appropriate responses
- Explain that pictures should only be accepted and sent with parental permission
- Review the difference between a keep and a speak secret\* (a keep secret is harmless and will eventually come out, like a birthday present; a speak secret is one that children are told never to tell, like being threatened by someone). They need to tell a trusted adult about speak secrets
- Ensure they always get your permission before sharing personal information or accepting anything. Teach them what is meant by personal information and where on the Internet they may be asked for it
- Online profiles should be set up with adult supervision. Ensure screen names and nicknames are nondescript (not revealing true interests, age, gender, or posting pictures)
- Explain to children that as passwords and screen names change, they must be provided to you
- Web cams should only be used with direct parental supervision and pictures should only be accepted and sent with parental permission
- Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it (it may never be completely removed from the Internet)
- Spend time with your children and know what they are doing online and offline
- Discuss the concept of anonymity on the Internet (people can pretend to be anyone)
- Talk about friendship: what it is and isn't\*. Explain that new friendships started online need to be adult supervised (children should never meet in person someone they meet online without an accompanying parent)
- Teach them to incorporate personal safety strategies\* into their daily lives to reduce risks (online and offline)
- Teach them assertiveness skills
- Communicate openly; listen and acknowledge feelings
- Ensure they have at least one trusted adult they can talk to (parent, aunt, grandparent, teacher, etc.)

• Adapted from: Linda Ashford; Sharon Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson; Jay Giedd; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman; Micheal Gurian; Kenneth Lanning; Mary Anne Layden and Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman; Amy Lynch; Jean Piaget; David Soussa; Deborah Yurgelun-Todd

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