



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S. Parent's Guide Lesson 13 InterNet Safety

The goal of this lesson is for the students to develop the understanding that the InterNet is an amazing and useful tool when used properly, and at the same time can be a very dangerous place when safety rules are not followed. We have provided the students with an InterNet Safety Pledge for you and your child to read over and then put into effect.

We begin by going over the *P.L.U.S. InterNet Terms*. As we discuss these terms we draw a diagram of how your computer at home connects to your ISP, from there connects to browsers and other ISP's, and finally to the computer of a friend who you are chatting with. Our diagram gives the students a visual idea that the *World Wide Web (.www)* is truly worldwide. We also make the point that all computers (and any devices that have InterNet access) have an IP address. This address is your computer's fingerprint. With this address, someone who knows how to can track down your computer. This could be a hacker, a predator, a police officer, or any one with the knowledge and ability to do so. The point we make during this portion of the lesson is: information you put out onto the InterNet is documented, public, and traceable.

It's important for the students to know that just because they are sitting in their own home, safe and secure; once they venture out into cyberspace they are no longer invisible. One of the biggest reasons kids post and say inappropriate things online is because they feel safe, sitting in their own home, detached with no personal eye to eye or ear to ear contact, and no oversight by parents. Our kids need to apply the same reasoning to their InterNet conversations as they would *stranger danger* concepts. 1. Always tell your parents where you are going. (If you can't tell your parents...why are you there?) 2. Don't give out personal information. (How can you run if they know where you live?) 3. Would you walk up to a car and speak with a stranger? (Why speak with someone you can't see?) 4. Never take money, candy, gifts, etc. from people you don't know. (Cell phones and calling cards are often given as a way to entice youth to have "freedom" from parents.) Remember, once it's on the net there is no taking it back.....even if you delete it.

The privacy of sitting in your bedroom while on the InterNet leads to another disturbing problem.....*Cyber bullying*. Kids will pick on other kids, make up rumors, set-up *hate* surveys, and solicit other negative comments from other kids about a particular person. Things are more easily said "in the privacy of your room" than in a face-to-face conversation. It's a powerful feeling to be able to say what you want....thinking it will never get back to you....when no one is there to call you on it. *Cyber bullying* is cowardly and lacks a true sense of compassion for others.

Our next step is to bring the discussion to what the students are doing with their InterNet access. Amy, a young teen, said, "*If you don't have a Facebook account and the ability to text you are thought of as a loser..... a nobody. Your popularity is measured by your friends list. And if you make someone mad in real life, or online, you can just kind of expect that they will talk about you somewhere online. I'm really careful who I tell things to – personal things – because I see so much stuff posted online by people who are mad at someone else about something.*" Some students tell us that they research information for school papers online. Others talk about shopping online for music and videos. Others talk about *real-time gaming* (playing games online with your opponent(s) in a way that allows you to interact as if you were in the same room on the same game console). But, what most of the students say is "It's all about friends.", they chat (IMing) with friends, go to *Socializing Web Sites* like Facebook, Instagram, Bebo, Xanga, and many more, and go to sites like YouTube to watch (and download) homemade videos. It's amazing how much is out there for the curious mind.

We ask the students what types of messages they see from others they socialize with and "talk" with online. Messages about what they're up too, who they're hanging with, cool movies, cool YouTube postings, and music are always the topic of the day. You may or may not be amazed with the amount of drama, negative and cutting remarks, and bullying seen by the children while they are online.

We talk about the “image” we create about ourselves while we are online. That image is seen by millions of people who have never met us and will never meet us to really get to know who we are. They will only know “what we show them online”. As we begin to look at college or finding a job to begin our career we WILL be looked at online. What is the image we want that potential college admissions person to see or that potential employer? Do we want them to see a bully, bigot, insensitive non-caring person? Maybe we want them to see an immature, irresponsible, drug user? The bottom line is we may never get the chance to even talk with them before they form an opinion of us and we are removed from their “potentials” list.

We talk about how important it is to create a “**Positive Virtual Identity**” online. We need to create an image that when it is seen by the potential college or employer they see character, a positive attitude, a helpful and caring individual, someone who stands for what they would want as a representative of their organization. We are not going to keep our children off line. Fact: for our children to be employable they will need to know how to use the internet, use it wisely and responsibly, and show themselves as positive individuals. So we need to teach our kids a way to do this online....the same way we teach them to be assertive, a good listener, a person who cares about family and friends.

There is another issue with creating a poor image online. Predators look for *targets*; targets are how inappropriate information posted online identifies YOU. TARGETs like being willing to LIE to parents, willing to take dangerous RISKS, willing to do things that you know you SHOULDN'T, willing to break family and societal RULEs, willing to HURT or not CARE about yourself and others, showing others that it's obvious that PARENTs are not aware or involved with what their child is putting online. Predators look for targets, and the more they see, the more a person becomes a potential victim for further pursuit. Experts say the short-term goal of these predators is for the victim to feel comfortable and safe enough to want to meet them in person. If the predator doesn't see targets, they won't bother to take the time to pursue. Do you think a youth who has parents involved with what they are doing online will show as many targets as the youth who has no parental involvement with their online activities?

As our conversation progresses we discuss appropriate versus inappropriate sites. We give the students this simple way to test if the site is appropriate or inappropriate: *Would you be on this site, saying what you are saying, if your grandma or grandpa were sitting next to you?* If the answer is "No," then it's NOT appropriate.

Student/Parent Home Work (Week #13): P.L.U.S. InterNet Safety Pledge

Read, discuss and sign the *P.L.U.S. InterNet Safety Pledge*. Please bring this completed pledge back to class to receive homework credit. We have also asked the students to write down two or more questions to ask the High school role models. These questions can be of any type as long as they connect to something that is P.L.U.S. related.

<u>School</u>	<u>P.L.U.S. Graduations</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
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Ohio Law

ORC Section 2917.21: Telecommunications Harassment.

(A) No person shall knowingly make or cause to be made a telecommunication (email, text, web posting, blog, phone call, et al), or knowingly permit a telecommunication to be made from a telecommunications device under the person's control, to another, if the caller does any of the following: Fails to identify the caller to the recipient of the telecommunication and makes the telecommunication with purpose to harass or abuse any person. Describes, suggests, requests, or proposes that the caller, the recipient of the telecommunication, or any other person engage in sexual activity.

(B) No person shall make or cause to be made a telecommunication (email, text, web posting, blog, phone call, et al), or permit a telecommunication to be made from a telecommunications device under the person's control, with purpose to abuse, threaten, or harass another person.

(C)(1) Whoever violates this section is guilty of telecommunications harassment. A violation of this section is a misdemeanor of the first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree on each subsequent offense.