

# Social Networking: Building Good Connections

## Session Overview

This session invites high school students to develop skills needed to safely and effectively navigate their ways through social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace*.

## Session Schedule

- |                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| • Welcome and Community Builder | 10 minutes |
| • Introduction to the Issue     | 20 minutes |
| • Understanding the Issue       | 20 minutes |
| • Short Break                   | 10 minutes |
| • Exploring the Issue           | 30 minutes |
| • Addressing the Issue          | 30 minutes |
| • Closing Comments and Prayer   | 5 minutes  |

## Learning Outcomes

- The participants will explore the pros and the cons of social networking sites.
- The participants will assess a variety of social networking postings and seek out ways to ensure their own safety when using these sites.

## Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - ▶ Computer with large screen (or connected to an LCD projector or television monitor. You will also need to have Internet access.
  - ▶ Newsprint and markers
  - ▶ Pencils or pens, one for each participant
  - ▶ Blank sheets of paper
  - ▶ Self-stick notes, enough so that each participant can have 4 sheets)
- Download the Safety Presentation for Teens presentation found at the [www.netsmartz.org/Presentations/](http://www.netsmartz.org/Presentations/). In order to activate the download you will need to complete a simple request form. You will want to review the presentation in preparation for the session and set the PowerPoint to begin with slide number 28.
- If you are not already a member of *Facebook* or *MySpace*, you'll need to get registered at one of the sites. This is a simple process, which will allow you the opportunity to explore a social networking site. You will also want to locate four member pages for evaluation by the participants during the session. Choose two pages that you

- would consider “not safe” and two pages that reflect good decision making regarding content.
- If you know who will be attending this session, extend an invitation for any of the participants who currently have a *Facebook* or *MySpace* account to print out a screen shot of their page and ask that they bring the printout with them to the session.
  - *Optional: if you have access to a computer lab or you can gather multiple laptop computers, one for every 5-6 participants would be optimal. If not the large computer screen and monitor will work.*

### Welcome and Community Building (10 minutes)

1. Welcome the participants and invite them to divide into small groups of 5 to 6 people. Provide each participant with 4 self-stick notes and a pen or pencil. Provide each small group with a sheet of newsprint and a marker.
2. Ask the participants to take a few minutes to think about four interesting facts about themselves. They can share as little or as much information as they choose. But they must select four. Ask them to write down each fact on a separate self-stick note. When they have completed the task they should write their name somewhere on the sheet of newsprint and “post” their notes near their name. Allow about 5 minutes for them to complete this task.
3. Ask the participants to share with their small group members what they wrote down. Allow a few minutes for everyone to share. Then pose the following question:
  - a. How many of you shared information that would offer clues about your personal life? (i.e., where you go to school, where you work, your parents' names, the name of your best friend, etc.)
  - b. How many of you kept your answers pretty generic and guarded?
  - c. If I had asked you to choose to share four things about yourself by posting that information online, how many of you would have chosen different response? Why?

### Introduction to the Issue (20 minutes)

1. Begin by asking for a show of hands as to how many have a *Facebook* or *MySpace* accounts. Then ask a few participants to tell you why they decided to “sign up” for social networking (the terms

- use to describe sites like *Facebook* and *MySpace*). Elicit a few responses and jot them down on a sheet of newsprint.
2. Ask the participants what they like about social networking and why they think it's a valuable communication tool. Again elicit a few responses.
  3. Note that while there are a lot of great reasons and benefits to being a member of a social network, there are some serious risk involved too if members don't think through the kind of information they post about themselves. This session will help them explore the pros and the cons of social networking sites.
  4. Invite the participants to gather around the computer screen or television monitor you have set up. Let them know they will be viewing a number of PowerPoint slides as well as short videos to get them a bit more familiar with what is involved in setting up good social networking connections.
  5. Begin the presentation with slide 28. Offer the following comments to each corresponding slide or to introduce each video segment.

Slide 28:

- As most of you already know, a social networking site is a place where users can create a personal profile or page and connect with other Internet users. Social networking sites include Facebook, MySpace, friendsters, Xenga, as well as some of the other site listed here.
- Social networking sites incorporate instant messaging, chat rooms, profiles, pictures, e-mail, and blogging all in one site.
- Yet many of young people are unaware that they put themselves at risk on their pages by revealing personal information that should be reserved for friends and family. Anyone on the Internet can have access to these sites, including people who seek to harm us.

Slide 29:

- How can you help protect yourself? First and foremost, use the privacy settings of the site so that people can only view your profile if you have approved them as a friend.
- Remember that even if you use the privacy settings, there is still a lot of information about you that anyone can access.
- If you are using privacy settings and only adding friends you know in real life, there is no need to post your personal

information. Your close friends already know all this about you. You wouldn't open up to random people on the street, so why would you do that online?

Slide 30:

- Here's an example of a teen's profile. How is I-candy putting herself at risk? (*Here you can stop and invite a few responses from the participants if you choose*).
- She posted her age, location, birthday, and a photo showing the name of her school team. With just a little bit of research, someone could easily find out her full name and school and pinpoint her exact location.
- She also goes by the name 'I-candy.'" Not so good. Nicknames or screen names should be gender-neutral, not contain any information that could reveal your identity or location and should never be suggestive.

Slide 31:

- Be careful about posting photos that might be considered provocative or inappropriate. Once they are out there you can't get them back, as we will see in this video.

Slide 32:

- Short video will play.

Slide 33:

- Here is an example of a contact list, also known as a friends list.
- Only add people you know and trust in real life as 'friends". Adding people as friends just to increase your perceived popularity is not worth the risk associated with giving people you do not know full access to your profile.

Slide 34:

- Every social networking site allows its users to leave comments on each other's pages.
- Make sure you monitor what your friends post on your page. Always approve the comments on your page and delete ones you feel are inappropriate or make you uncomfortable.
- Also, help protect your friends by being careful about what you post on their pages.
- Which of these comments could put I-candy at risk? The first and third comments mention future plans and details

regarding whereabouts. Even posting what time you get off of work is information that someone could use to harm you.

Slide 35:

- How many of you keep a journal, diary or daily blog? Some people blog about general topics such as music, movies, or games, but if you are using blogs as an outlet for more personal things, use privacy settings to control who can view them.

Slide 36:

- If you wouldn't want someone to read your personal journal or diary, don't post it online.
- Teens that are vulnerable are an easy target for predators. By reading your blogs, they can get a lot of information to

Slide 37 and Slide 38:

- Short video will play.

Slide 39:

- Remember you cannot expect your profile or blog to be completely private. If it is on the Internet, it is NOT private and can be viewed by millions.
- Think about the image you convey to everyone online - parents, teacher's colleges, potential employers, and so forth. Students have been suspended from school, lost job and career opportunities, and had their reputations destroyed because of information posted on their profiles and blogs.

(The above presentation points were taken from the Leader's Guide for the Safety Presentation for Teens found online at the website [www.netSMARTZ.org/Presentations/](http://www.netSMARTZ.org/Presentations/) Copyright © 2004 and 2007 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children)

### Understanding the Issue (20 minutes)

1. Invite the participants to re-gather in their small groups and discuss the following questions:
  - a. Based on the information presented in the slide show and video what do you consider the three most important things to remember when you sign on to a social network like *Facebook* or *MySpace*?

- b. What advice would you offer a friend who was considering setting up a social networking account? (Allow about 10 minutes or so for the groups to discuss.)
2. Invite each group to share their responses to the questions. You can record their answers on a sheet of newsprint if you'd like. If the following ideas are not suggested, be sure to offer them.
  - a. Think about how different sites work before deciding to join. Some sites will allow only a defined community of users to access posted content; others allow anyone and everyone to view postings.
  - b. Think about keeping some control over the information you post. Consider restricting access to your page to a select group of people, for example, your friends from school, your club, your team, your community groups, or your family.
  - c. Keep your information to yourself. Don't post your full name, Social Security number, address, phone number, or bank and credit card account numbers — and don't post other people's information, either.
  - d. Employers, colleges, scholarship committees, and even potential friends will form opinions about you based on what you choose to share in profiles and posts. Make sure they will like what they see.
  - e. Check photos and videos to make sure you're not accidentally sharing information that would make you easy to track down. Background details like sports uniforms, well-known landmarks, and street signs can provide clues that might allow you to be located by untrustworthy or malicious people. Better yet, consider not posting your photo. It can be altered and broadcast in ways you may not be happy about. If you do post one, ask yourself whether it's one your mom would display in the living room.
  - f. Leaving your profile public can bring unwanted attention. Public profiles might attract people who are fun to get to know, but you can also be contacted by others who are dishonest, annoying, demanding, or scary. Be selective by keeping your profile private.
  - g. Balance your online life with in-person relationships and activities.
  - h. Spending time blogging, updating your profile, and e-mailing new friends can suck up huge amounts of time. Keep plenty of space in your life for your family, school, activities, and friends you can see face-to-face.
  - i. Remember that once you post information online, you can't take it back. Even if you delete the information from a site,

older versions exist on other people's computers. Even in a private profile, make careful choices about what to share.

From [www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov)

### Exploring the Issue (30 Minutes)

1. Ask the participants to re-gather with their small groups. Provide each group with a sheet of blank paper and a pen or pencil. Ask someone from each group to serve as the "recorder". Tell the participants that you have selected four random pages from one of the social networking websites for their review and evaluation. Show the first page posting and allow the groups some time to review it. (If you are using a computer lab or have multiple computers available - assign a computer to each group and then provide them with the information they need to go to the pages you have chosen. Then pose the following questions. You may want to list these questions on a sheet of newsprint so groups can reference throughout the activity.
  - a. What are the strengths of this page?
  - b. What are the weaknesses?
  - c. What would you remove from the page?
  - d. What would you change or add?
2. Allow the group a few minutes to discuss the questions before moving onto the next posting. If time permits you can invite a group or two to offer some of their observations. Continue this process until all four posting have been shown and discussed.

### Addressing the Issue (20 Minutes)

1. Note that as a final activity, the participants will now have the chance to either evaluate their own *Facebook* and *MySpace* pages or begin to consider what they might include on a social networking site, were they to set up an account.
2. Invite those who brought a screen shot of their page to take some time to look at it, and evaluate their current postings based on the information and insights they have gained from this session. Ask them to consider the following questions in their evaluation. Ask the participants to jot down the answers to these questions in the backside of their print out.
  - a. What are the strengths of your page?
  - b. What are the weaknesses?
  - c. What should you remove from the page?
  - d. What should you change?
  - e. What might be okay to add?

3. For those participants who do not have a social networking page ask them to take some time to consider what they would post if they were to create a page. Provide this set of participants with a blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil and ask them to jot down the responses to these questions.
  - a. What about yourself would you include?
  - b. Who would have access to your page?
  - c. Would you post photographs - if so which ones?
  - d. How could you make your page unique without giving away too much information about yourself?

Alternate Option:

If the participants have access to multiple computers form groups that can either evaluate one of the group members *MySpace* or *Facebook* page, or create a page for someone in the group. If it's the latter you need to make sure that the young person has parental permission to set up the account before he or she does so.

Closing Comments and Prayer (10 Minutes)

1. Offer a summary of the session using your own observations of the time together. Then invite a few participants to share their own reflections.
2. Conclude by inviting the participants to bow their heads in prayer and then pray the following prayer aloud.

Holy Spirit of God, Saint Isidore was one of the most learned men of his day and has become the patron saint of computer users and the Internet.

[We] ask him to assist our modern world through his prayers.

O Lord, bless how we in our society handle computers and the Internet. Send your holy angels to inspire websites and programs that glorify you and that build up rather than destroy people's minds, hearts and souls.

Saint Isidore, pray for us. Amen.

(The above prayer is adapted from *Daily Prayers with the Saints for the New Millennium*, by Terry Ann Modica).

## Additional Resources for Exploring the Issue of On-Line Safety

[www.OnGuardOnline.gov](http://www.OnGuardOnline.gov) is the official website for the Federal Trade Commission. The site provides practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information.

[www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org) is a public service sponsored by Internet industry corporations and public interest organizations to help ensure that Internet users have safe, constructive, and educational or entertaining online experiences.

[www.iKeepSafe.org](http://www.iKeepSafe.org) is the website of the Internet Keep Safe Coalition, a coalition of 49 governors/first spouses, law enforcement, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other associations dedicated to helping parents, educators, and caregivers by providing tools and guidelines to teach children the safe and healthy use of technology.

[www.i-safe.org](http://www.i-safe.org) is a non-profit foundation dedicated to protecting the online experiences of youth everywhere. i-SAFE incorporates classroom curriculum with dynamic community outreach to empower students, teachers, parents, law enforcement, and concerned adults to make the Internet a safer place

[www.staysafeonline.org](http://www.staysafeonline.org) is a non-profit organization that provides tools and resources to empower home users, small businesses, and schools, colleges, and universities to stay safe online.

[www.staysafe.org](http://www.staysafe.org) is an educational site intended to help consumers understand both the positive aspects of the Internet as well as how to manage a variety of safety and security issues that exist online.

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org) is an Internet safety and help group. Comprised of unpaid volunteers around the world, WiredSafety.org provides education, assistance, and awareness on all aspects of cyber crime and abuse, privacy, security, and responsible technology use.

