Crime Prevention in Changing Times

Crime Prevention Week - November 1st to 7th, 2017

Crime Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility

Digital Citizenship

The digital domain has changed how people of all ages perceive, interact with, and respond to the world around them. Innovations in technology have provided children and youth with new opportunities for learning, both in and out of school, and have enabled students to connect to learning communities around the world. Social media has provided society with an immersive environment to connect with and interact with each other

Digital Citizenship is something that is not automatic knowledge for all people. Being a good digital citizen is more than knowing your way around the web, it is about safe and responsible technology use.

What is Digital Citizenship?

Digital Citizenship can be defined as the norms and behavior with regard to technology use, abuse and misuse. Some of the key elements that make-up digital citizenship include:

- Digital Etiquette: standards of conduct for behaving and interacting with other digital users.
- Digital Health and Wellness: the physical and psychological well-being of living in a technologically connected world.
- Digital Security: precautions to create a sense of safety online.
- Digital Identity: As one communicates, creates and collaborates in online forums, they are progressively building a digital identity. This identity can remain public for many years, whether positive or negative. The types of self-expression, self-reflection and feedback conducted online all influence the image one portrays both online and offline.

Striking a Balance

Part of being a good digital citizen is knowing when to take a break from media and technology to spend time with the people we love.

A healthy media diet, for all age groups, balances online activities (games, social media, shopping, TV), with offline activities (physical activities, face-to-face conversations, reading and other mental activities). Aim for a balance of activities throughout the week. Involve children and youth in the planning activities through the week, including activities that have to be completed, such as homework or chores, and recreational or social activities.

Teaching Children Media Literacy

Media consumption has become the norm rather than the exception for today's youth. According to MediaSmarts, Canadian youth are not as digitally literate as adults think they are. Though today's young people have grown up immersed in digital media, they still rely on parents and teachers to help them advance their skills in areas such as searching and verifying online information.

The landscape is as scattered with both opportunities to inspire and educate, along with techniques designed to deceive and manipulate. Successfully navigating the digital landscape requires a broad range of digital skills.

MediaSmarts found youth were learning and applying only the digital skills they consider essential to the context of the task they were participating in (i.e. gaming, social networking, video streaming). Digital literacy includes asking specific questions and backing up information that is available from online sources. Teach children to:

- be aware of the biases present in the various media platforms and better understand media as merely a construction shaped by the creator's opinions, assumptions, and perceptions.
- use effective strategies to search for information (e.g., keywords, narrowing a search) and credible online resources (e.g., databases, encyclopedias, eBooks)
- use inquiry and curiosity to evaluate and reflect critically on information/resources/sites.

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Tips for Adults

Keeping children and youth safe online requires parental involvement to help them learn how to navigate the digital landscape. To achieve this, parents and caring adults need to become informed about the online spaces and activities children and youth enjoy.

- Decide on the level of supervision and access you want over a child's online accounts. For most families, trust and communication is more effective than surveillance. Talk about it. Ask questions about your child's favorite games, shows, and characters. Discuss ideas and issues they read about or learn through a TV show or a game. "Friend or follow" your child. This is an opportunity for bonding, learning, and sharing your values.
- Have ongoing conversations about privacy online. Talk about the importance of using care with what is posted or shared online, including whether your child has permission to share something. Discuss possible consequences of what they are doing, who may see what they are posting, and the ways that someone might misinterpret a message. Help tweens and teens navigate and manage their online privacy.
- Talk about and model respect for intellectual property online. It can be easy to believe all content found online is free. Discuss the consequences of viewing and downloading content illegally – legitimate websites will not show recent TV shows or movies that are still in theatres without charging for them. Use legitimate sources to stream or purchase music, movies or TV content. Copying anything, is plagiarism, if you do not say where it came from. Teach the importance of recording and referencing online sources used for research,
- Create tech-free zones. Set rules that fit your family, such as "no devices during dinner," "no social media during homework," or "all screens off before bedtime." Walk the walk - children will learn habits from their adults of influence.
- Encourage open communication. Talk about what to do in response to upsetting online behaviour. Use current events as conversation starters. Treat mistakes as teachable moments.

Additional Resources

Common Sense Media: provides resources to assist parents and teachers harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in the lives of children and youth.
www.commonsensemedia.org

Digital Citizenship: Guide for Parents: a guide for parents/guardians to assist them in talking to children and youth about digital citizenship
www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/cmpgns/cmpgn-06/gd-prnts-en.aspx

Get Cyber Safe: A website providing information and resources to prevent online victimization.
www.getcybersafe.gc.ca

MediaSmarts: develops and provides digital and media literacy programs and resources for Canadian homes, schools and communities.
www.mediasmarts.ca

NeedHelpNow.ca: assists youth impacted by self/peer exploitation stop the spread of sexual pictures or videos. This website provides youth with practical steps to regain control over the situation, including information about contacting websites/ online services to request a picture/video be removed, and information to assist those supporting impacted youth.
www.needhelpnow.ca

Digital Citizenship: a website providing information and resources on digital citizenship and the responsible use of technology.
www.digitalcitizenship.net

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