"NetSafe Utah: Cybersafe Your Teens" Show Transcript

Doug Fabrizio:
Technology is a mixed bag. The digital age offers access and convenience, but it's also introduced a new layer of anxiety for parents. It's hard enough trying to keep up with the pace of innovation. Parents these days have limited control over a vast gathering place. Tonight we're exploring the threats of the digital age for young people, and we're offering some guidance for parents to help manage and control a technology that's constantly on the move.

Announcer: Funding for "NetSafe Utah: Cybersafe Your Teens" is provided in part by the Utah State Legislature, through a grant from the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice...and by the members of KUED. Thank you!

Doug Fabrizio:
Good evening. I'm Doug Fabrizio. Thanks for joining us. It's not easy for those of us of another generation to concede this point, but young people in the digital age have the edge in making technology a part of their lives.

You ever watch a teenager punch out a text message or share a sound file? Their facility with this stuff is almost instinctual. But an intuitive understanding of the hardware hasn't endowed these kids with a greater sense of judgment or awareness. Experts say half of all teenagers venture into chat rooms to interact with complete strangers.

For parents trying to wrap your minds around all of this, you have to understand that young people want something different from technology than you. While you're looking for convenience and information, they're kids. They're looking for entertainment and they want to socialize.

And so in this sense, the modern world is the same as generations past-- young people looking to hook up and, at times, getting themselves in trouble.

This evening we're in the studios of KUED with parents and tech experts, law enforcement and young people themselves to get a better understanding of the social culture and the threats of the digital age.

We begin tonight with the efforts of law enforcement, when Internet relationships cross the line.

Officer:
Let's bring 'em in.

Doug Fabrizio:
Chris Ahearn's task force is on the move. Tonight is the culmination of an extensive investigation-- the team is after a man who's been trolling the Internet downloading child pornography.

Back at the office, another case is underway and Lieutenant Rhett McQuiston has just settled down at his computer to play a role-- tonight he's a 14-year-old girl, and just moments after he's signed in, older men are beginning to circle.

Rhett McQuiston:
This is a problem that we cannot arrest our way out of. There are just too many perpetrators, there are too many websites, and as fast as technology advances, the Internet bad guys, so to speak, always stay one step ahead of law enforcement.

Doug Fabrizio:
Ahearn knows to get a grip on the growing threat they're going to need help, and this means more than just a larger budget or a bigger staff.

Chris Ahearn:
Parents can help in the whole picture of Internet safety by being aware of what their children are doing on the Internet.

What sites are they visiting? Are they posting profiles of themselves? What is the content of that profile? Who are the people that they're interacting with? Are they interacting with total strangers that they have no idea who they are? Or are they interacting with a handful of friends from school? Or maybe cousins that live out of state?

Doug Fabrizio:
Experts say more than 90 percent of parents think they know what their kids are up to online, but ask the young people whether that's true. In one study, barely 40 percent of high school kids said they share all their Internet activity with their folks. Put those figures alongside this one-- that one in seven young people receive unwanted sexual solicitations online. And the predators have a system. Chris Ahearn says they use grooming techniques to make their victims believe they're a friend-- even a mentor. The goal is to turn a virtual relationship into a real one.

Ahearn says if you pay attention, you can spot the warning signs for these relationships.

Chris Ahearn:
Is the child very adamant about getting on the Internet at a certain time of day-- before they leave for school, the moment they get home from school, you know. Is this a circumstance where a pedophile is trying to work their way into that child's life, dominate their life, and wanting an accounting of where the child is all the time.

Rhett McQuiston:
I think the number one problem we've seen when a child has been victimized by this type of crime is that, in a lot of cases, they've had Internet connections and computers in their bedroom or in an area of the house where the parents don't frequent often. We recommend that if you're gonna have the Internet access in your home on the computer, that the computer that's hooked to the Internet be placed in a main room.

Chris Ahearn:

Another thing to be looking at from the parent's perspective is how much time the children are spending on the Internet? Do they have the Internet shut down so that at 10 or 11 o'clock at night so there's no access to that? Most people are aware that chat rooms are a dangerous arena for minor children to be allowed to go into without being appropriately supervised. But there's a lot of other areas.

Doug Fabrizio:
Areas like peer-to-peer sharing. Studies show that nearly half of all young people online share personal information about themselves with total strangers.

They do it on sharing networks like Limewire, Bareshare and Kazaa. This is Dave White's area of expertise.

Dave White:
What parents don't realize is where they may be thinking that their kids are just doing something relatively passive, you know--they're downloading music... I'm not having to pay for it, you know, they're able to get it this way, it's satisfying that need that they have-- but the problem is they don't know exactly what that file is when they get it on their computer.

Doug Fabrizio:
Another technique for online predators is mislabeling files like pornography and viruses. Mostly a young person's interest is innocent enough-- they want to listen to a song or see a music video-- but often these files turn out to be so-called trojan programs that can overtake a computer and indiscriminately spread your kid's personal information.

No one is suggesting that parents simply shut off the computer-- the problem and the solution is more complicated than that. Officials say the digital age presents new challenges for parents, but also different options for predators.

In the meantime, the task force made their arrest tonight knowing this is only one front in a larger battle.

Rhett McQuiston:
Internet predators is one of the fastest-growing crime problems that America's facing today.

Chris Ahearn:
I'm not a novice police officer. I've done this for over 30 years. I was aware that there were people out there that had this interest, but the number of people has absolutely astounded me.

Dave White:
We don't want to scare them from the Internet. We don't want to make the point that the Internet is bad. You know, the Internet is a very useful tool, but, you know, there's a dark side.

And like we've grown up having to become street smart, it's the same thing on the Internet. Kids have got to learn that there are places they shouldn't go.

Doug Fabrizio:
Okay, before we jump in, we want to remind you that throughout the evening we're offering a free resource packet with information on Internet safety. To get it, just visit the NetSafe website at: www.netsafeutah.org or you can call 1-800-866-5852.

Joining us is Pete Ashdown. Pete will serve as our technical support, as it were. Pete started Xmission, the state's first Internet service provider, in 1993. It's grown to become one of Utah's largest independent companies.

And Pete, welcome. Thanks for being with us.

Amber Lindsay is here to help us understand the culture of the Internet, a social scene for young people. Amber is the Manager of Marketing and Outreach for the NetSmartz Workshop. It's part of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

And Amber, welcome to you.

Amber Lindsay:
Thank you.

Doug Fabrizio:
And Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff is here to help us understand the role law enforcement plays in all of this. The Attorney General has made prosecuting Internet predators a primary focus in his work.

And Mr. Attorney General, thank you for joining us.

Mark Shurtleff:
Pleasure, thanks, Doug.

Doug Fabrizio:
Pete Ashdown, I want to start with you. How do you think parents should be thinking about this technology? It's easy to get intimidated with the pace of it all, and you know, you could be forgiven for wanting to stay away from it entirely. How are you thinking about it?

Pete Ashdown:
They need to be hand-in-hand with their children on this, though. I think it's important to tell parents that there are resources available. You know, in my business, I want parents and people to be using the Internet; otherwise, I'm out of business. So we try and make it easy for parents and educators and businesses to know the options in front of them in protecting people on the Internet.

But I think there's also an opportunity here. If you are ignorant of what's going on with the Internet, you have an expert right in your house. You know, work with your children to understand it. Uh, it's the same story as the law enforcement said--if you're out on the street, you

tell your children, you know, don't get in a car with a stranger. Don't be picked up by somebody who says that they're my friend from school. It's the same kind of thing.

The Internet is like a virtual city, and you have to advise your children how to protect themselves against the seedier parts of it.

Doug Fabrizio:
Let's go to a question from Dale Bills who's here in our audience. Dale, go ahead.

Dale Bills:
One of my concerns is that I don't know how to stay up on what the kids seem to know is there. It was months and months before I was aware of MySpace, but kids knew that it was there and they were using it.

How do I as a parent, as a school district employee, make myself aware of these kinds of things?

Pete Ashdown:
I think what's going on right now is a good way to do that. And Xmission offers classes to any group, any organization-- we'll go out and teach people free of charge about the things that are going on on the Internet, and what they should be concerned about.

We offered a class at the library just last week, and I have to say the attendance was a little bit dismal. But getting that word out is important, that people know that there are options available. And, you know, people in government, people in business are all interested in advising you on those situations.

Doug Fabrizio:
How pervasive is this problem and how concerned do you think parents should be?

Mark Shurtleff:
You know, one of the agents out here said we don't want to scare kids away from the Internet. I want to scare parents. I want to terrify them-- not that they don't use the Internet, but what risks their kids are at. They are.

Think of your cat who's a predator and you're the mouse. They may want to play with you. It may seem harmless on the Internet cuz the kids say, "Well, I could pretend to be somebody I'm not." But they're expert at finding, first of all, the child that has low self-esteem, that may be having trouble at school, that may be having trouble with you, the parents. They start in a very insidious way to weave this web of deceit and to be their friend and I want to give you things, and it's just incredible because kids crave that attention, that recognition, that approbation, that they are sucked into this, Doug, and it is critical that parents understand that.

Doug Fabrizio:
Amber, I wanted to ask you your sense of the social culture, a part of all of this. What is it that kids are really after on the Internet.

Amber Lindsay:
You know, we're seeing younger and younger children going on the Internet, and we keep asking ourselves what's drawing them to this. And we find that when we question them or talk to parents, they are after that connection, that human connection. Often times they're not getting it at home or at school, and so they're going to find someone who is giving them attention. Some of the grooming tactics that were discussed--making them sound like they're their friends, that they're interested in them, and looking for information that they may be giving online about themselves--whether they are in disagreements with their parents or they are insecure about themselves and getting the affirmation from somebody else. But also just that curiosity. We're dealing with children, you know, typically of the 10- to 14-year-old age where maybe they're uncomfortable going to their parents. They may be sexually curious, and it's that anonymity they have that gives them that bravery to go out sometimes and do potentially risky behaviors online.

Doug Fabrizio:
Are they looking to, "hang out" is a word you often hear. Are they looking to hang out with friends they know or are they looking to find new relationships?

Amber Lindsay:
Sure, you know, I think a lot of kids go online-- they hear about it at school, you know, that's where they go to plan where they're gonna hang out Friday night. But I do think there's that temptation when you're on a social networking site and it boasts millions of members that you are getting those invitations from random individuals who ask you to put them as their friend on their social networking site, and it's tempting. It's new friends, you know. on their site-- their friends list-- that's a-- that's a boasting point. You know, the more friends you have on your page, you know, the more popular you seem, so it's very tempting to start talking with individuals that they don't know in real life.

Doug Fabrizio:
Let's go to a question from our audience again. Laura Price is with us with a question. Laura, go ahead.

Laura Price:
Yes, I was wondering what the best deterrent would be to keep our kids safe from a potentially harmful site.

Mark Shurtleff:
It is absolutely the parents. You know, a lot of parents when they answer our surveys, they always think that they're way down the list of their ability to influence their kids. That's whether it's the Internet or use of drugs, alcohol and so forth. Kids, when they answer the same surveys, surprisingly they still put parents. And that's the key. We want parents to know that. And that's what's so critical about all of this is that parents are so-- I don't know-- nervous about working on the computer and the kids are so good at it that sometimes we don't connect and they don't know how to talk. And we'll talk about, I'm sure, NetSmartz.org and other programs out there where you can get educated, where you can go download a page of terms that the kids are using for text messaging and how you can understand what they're talking about. And when you walk in the

room and you see them typing "POS," it used to mean something else when I was a kid-- I won't repeat now...

[Laughing]

But it means "parent over shoulder," so quickly they've given a signal without you knowing that there may be a parent watching so watch what you're saying.

Amber Lindsay:
You know, they're smart and when we talk to them and they see an image or they receive something, having them feel comfortable to come to you and say, you know, "I received this." "Let's talk about it." "Can we block this site?" Or whatever that action may be that you need to take, but often kids feel like they are going to get in trouble or get the Internet taken away, so it's important that they feel comfortable coming to you and recognize what's unsafe.

Doug Fabrizio:
Another question from the audience. This is Leadelle Parish.

Leadelle Parish:
I was wondering, what's the feasibility of having an additional suffix-- instead of .com or .org--of .xxx that would allow registrants and search engines and users alike to differentiate sexual content. Would that help us establish a border that we could enforce better?

Pete Ashdown:
The technical problem with that is that the computer doesn't care. All the computer sees is ones and zeroes, and whenever you try and lay down a standard, somebody's gonna try and violate that standard. And, you know, when SPAM first came on the rise I had a conversation with a friend. I said, "You know, why can't the U.N. or international bodies come together on this and come up with some international laws that would block spam?" He said, "They can't even stop child slavery, how do you expect them to stop SPAM?" So it's an international phenomenon, and that's why I say the control comes best in the home. If your Internet service provider is not giving you the tools to help you control what comes into your Internet, into your house, then you should find a new Internet service provider. But that control is best done inside the house, not at the U.N.

Doug Fabrizio:
I want to ask about, Amber, the language. The Attorney General mentioned some of the jargon that's out there and it is a separate kind of culture. Are you recommending that parents sort of learn to speak that language, that they themselves get to know how that culture works?

Amber Lindsay:
I do think it's important that--you know, just researching anything else about the Internet that would help keep your child safe, knowing what they're talking about, umm, possibly talking to them about it. But there are so many acronyms out there, and many of them potentially harmful.

You know, one that came across my desk awhile ago that shocked me was LMIRL. And I kept sitting there thinking, what could this mean? And we figured out it meant "let's meet in real life." So you never know what's coming across. And they are always coming up with new things, but if you are keeping savvy and a little bit knowing what your child's doing, it does help that interaction as well with your child.

Doug Fabrizio:
Attorney General, that "meeting in real life"-- is that when there's sort of a boundary crossed, that it stops being a virtual world and begins to be something real? And is this what predators are essentially after is an actual meeting?

Mark Shurtleff:
They are, but they don't always have to lure the child out. There are so many who will be aggressive enough to try and kidnap a child, so they're just trying to get information--anything they can get.

And a little piece of information--with all the wonderful search engines and so forth on the Internet, they can find out within a matter of 10 minutes with just a little bit of information where you live and names of parents and family, sometimes pets, information about the school, where you go to school. They draw maps... And we've arrested people with this information, uh, so they were planning to come and try and kidnap the child.

In addition to that, you could be harmed because some of them just want to send your kids pornography and horrible stuff of dead animals and things just because they get their kicks off of in that way hurting your child. So you have to understand that it's not just they're gonna be hurt only if they come out of the house and meet somebody. There's so many other ways to impact them.

Doug Fabrizio:
Amber, was there something you wanted to say?

Amber Lindsay:
You know, often predators are wanting to come to your child or meeting in real life, but there's also a major danger that I think is finally getting some publicity and some awareness to parents is the potential risk of webcams in the home. And that gives them instant access to your child, whether it's them viewing your child or your child viewing them. And often times it's not so much a predator like we imagine, but it's often peer-to-peer. Or even your child posting information or pictures about themselves with a webcam on a social networking site or some other peer-to-peer site that is actually child pornography. And they may be doing it thinking that it's cool or that it's sexy to their peers, but it's actually child pornography and they're getting in trouble for it.

Doug Fabrizio:
Back to a question from the audience-- Julie Keyes is with us.

Julie Keyes:

I realize that what you said is that the web is worldwide and countries may have their own laws to help with the Internet safety. What is our country doing for Internet safety and are there any laws for us? Or is it only up to the parents to make those laws?

Mark Shurtleff:
Well, I appreciate that question. There certainly is a lot of pressure, and a lot of legislators and all of us are looking at ways how we can provide tools. And, of course, every time we do something--the federal government's been trying this for some time--many of these cases are lost up at the Supreme Court level because of First Amendment concerns.

The legislature a couple of years ago created a child protection registry where you could go up and sign up if you have kids in the home, name would be scrambled... And we're being sued by the Free Speech Coalition, which is basically the pornographers out there. And we're defending those cases.

We're gonna continue to try what we can do. And technology-- they continue to look for ways to better provide tools for you. We will do those things and we want to be able to do them.

Pete Ashdown:
I think it's important to note that there is a country out there that has low crime rates and people don't see anything objectionable on the Internet and there's a very low rate of terrorism. It's North Korea. So there's a trade off, you know. If you want the government to come in and control the Internet, it can be controlled. They're doing it in North Korea.

If you want to look at another government that's trying to control the Internet, look at China. They've spent over a hundred million dollars trying to stop traffic getting in about, you know, political motives and people that want to change the government in China, but they can't do it.

I always talk about how the best way to control the Internet is to shut it down completely. But I believe in Internet censorship. I believe that parents should be the censors, though, and that's the most effective way to do it. So it's my job as a business person who sells the Internet to make sure that they have the tools to do that.

Doug Fabrizio:
As opposed to backing away from technology, I suppose the message for parents is to embrace it, take it on, learn to see how it works, all those kinds of things. Amber, do you think?

Amber Lindsay:
You know, I do. I think it's a wonderful tool, and, you know, these younger kids, you know, they go into second and third grade classes and they're researching on the Internet for their projects and, you know, I think it's amazing. And there's so many wonderful things out there for them on the Internet. They can connect to grandparents who live far away. There's wonderful resources, but, it's important for them to be able to share, like we've talked all evening, about sharing with their parents or having the parents come to children so they can embrace that together. That they all understand what's an acceptable use policy in that home. You know, time wise what's accepted, what sites are accepted, even what technology, what software, but it's important that

they're all coming from the same base level and that there's an understanding in the home of what's acceptable.

Pete Ashdown:
You know, I feel like we're scaring people-- the living daylights out of these people.

[Laughing]

But, you know, my daughter took a trip to Rome last summer, and I didn't look at that trip to Rome as, oh my gosh, do you know what goes on in Rome? You know, the most horrible things--there's prostitution in Rome, there's drug dealing in Rome, there's murder and death in Rome. I mean, it's a small part in that society, but it's there. But she saw art museums, she went to churches, she had the time of her life. And she came back, you know, unhurt because she had people there telling her what was the good parts of Rome, people that were watching her, holding her hand, taking her on these tours and she had a great time. And I think the same is true of the Internet. Any society out there, any large metropolitan city, you're gonna have those dangers. But you've gotta have people that are educated and steering your children in the right direction, and best of all, parents that are involved.

Doug Fabrizio:
Remember, you can learn more about the risks of the Internet for young people by getting a free resource packet from NetSafe Utah. That number will be on the screen throughout the evening, along with their website address.

For parents, for political leaders, for law enforcement officials, the dilemma is the same-- trying to contain the relationships that young people cultivate online inside that little box. For many, the Internet is a fantasy world-- a space where you can take on a different persona and explore your inclinations. The problem is when that fantasy spills over into real life.

This is the dynamic that interested the playwright Doris Baizley. Baizley's play, called "SEXSTING," takes on the taboos of Internet relationships, but also the questions of privacy and the ethics of capturing predators. "SEXSTING" has just closed at the Salt Lake Acting Company, earlier some of the actors performed readings from the play here in our studio. The scenes help give you a sense of the atmosphere in these chat rooms. You'll also see the central relationship in the play--an FBI agent who is masquerading as a young girl to draw in the predator character, John Doe, or as he's known online--Johnnyd.

LilLadygirrl: Hey Johnnyd…guess what??? A newbie just entered…

Johnnyd: oh yeah? What's her name?

LilLadygirrl: "sandibythesea"…check out her profile…

Johnnyd: "sandibythesea"…that's a nice name…

Tastygirl14: Hellooo fair maiden…Which parts of u are sandi?

CocoVixen: hey Sandi… u like older men or just checking the room out?

Pause.

Johnnyd: no answer I guess she's shy…

Tastygirl14: how old are you sandi?

LilLadygirrl: her profile says 14…

2young4U: lol! If she's on here don't believe a word…

CocoVixen: what grade r u in, sandi?

Johnnyd: had sex yet…?

2young4U: you go johnnyd…!

Johnnyd: hey sandi?... that's ok… you don't have to say…

LilLadygirrl: go on, sandi girl, tell it!!!!!

2young4U: doin its better.. 2Young4you knows!

Tastygirl14: LOL…I'll bet 2 young's a dirty old man!

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: Johnnyd…? you there?

Johnnyd: Sandi? Yeah… I'm here just like I said…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: sorry I missed you before…

Johnnyd: that's ok… I thought maybe you forgot about me…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: no way I'd foget… dad was just here is all… Where r u anyway?

Johnnyd: Elkville…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: Where's that???

Johnnyd: it's in Illinois… near St. Louis.

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: is it cold there?

Johnnyd: it's freezing this week… where do you live? Are you really Sandi by the sea…?

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: true story…Pacific Beach California…

Johnnyd: Sweet… is that near San Diego?

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: that's right … its 60 here and it feels cold… you should come out… its neat here…

Johnnyd: yeah I know… I was stationed in San Diego when I was in the Navy…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: you were in the Navy? When?

Johnnyd: 1980

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: wow

Johnnyd: why wow

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: oh… I don't know… I guess cause I wasn't even born then.

Johnnyd: yeah… weird… ☹

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: sorry…☹

Johnnyd: no problem… I'm ok with my age…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: your lucky I wish I was…

Johnnyd: cheer up… maybe someday I'll come out to see you…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: that would be sooo cool!!! I've never met anyone I've talked to on here… but I'm thinking about it…

Johnnyd: your urges are strong huh?

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: yeah...

Johnnyd: just like me…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: I think about it all the time

Johnnyd: you want my advice? Don't do it… don't meet anyone… guys on here can get real pushy…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: yeah but if I find the right guy I am gonna do it… I just don't want it to be anybody here that knows me… does that sound bad?

Johnnyd: no… just be careful... u could always wait for me…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: u mean it???? WHEN?

Johnnyd: we'll see… if we get to know each other better… maybe I could come up there 'n show u the ropes…

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: that's so nice of u!

Johnnyd: LOL… don't worry… most guys I know would jump at the chance!

Sandibythesea/Agent Roe: yeah I know!!! U r funny…

Johnnyd: thanx… I have a good time talking to you... and I would like to meet… but I wouldn't push you to do anything you didn't want to do okay?… I just want us to be friends, alright?

Agent Roe: "Friends." Damn. You know it's more than that.

Doug Fabrizio:
Well, as you can see, the Internet has taken on a life of its own. It's almost as if it's become a free-standing culture in its own right with its own rituals-- even its own language.

Here to help us interpret this emerging culture for parents is Jason Burrow-Sanchez. He's an Assistant Professor of Counseling Psychology at the University of Utah.

Also with us is Jerry Buie. He is the Director of Pride Counseling here in Salt Lake. Some of Jerry's work has been centered on providing therapy to sex offenders.

Anne Collier is the co-director of blogsafety.com. It's a guide to safe social networking over the web. She also co-authored the book "MySpace Unraveled: What it is and how to safely use it."

And welcome all. Thanks very much for being with us.

Anne Collier, I wanted to ask you first-- how important is it to understand what it is-- back to that question-- that kids are after. You've said this-- You say that kids don't see the Internet as a tool like adults do. They see it of a method of expression. This is an extension of themselves. Explain that.

Anne Collier:
It really mirrors their real lives and it is a way to express themselves and kind of explore their identities and find out who they are. They also seek validation there, which is something that parents need to think about--are they getting enough validation at home? But it is a marvelous tool for self-expression for them to a great degree, and most of them are using it relatively safely, and the research is bearing that out.

Doug Fabrizio:
Jason, the social dynamics here-- what do we learn in chat rooms and in these interactions about young people?

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
I think we learn that young people want to have connections with other people. I think we need to be careful, though, when young people are spending more time on the Internet as opposed to real-life connections with friends and so on. So I think one of the things you can see is when kids start to isolate themselves and spend more time in their room with the Internet as opposed to with other young people, it might be a risk factor or something to look for.

Doug Fabrizio:
Jerry Buie, I wanted to take you back to that clip, the scene that we saw from the Salt Lake Acting Company. What were you seeing in that dynamic? Johnnyd--what was he getting at there?

Jerry Buie:
Well, as I was watching that clip, I was kind of reminded of what it was like to be a 13- or a 14-year-old who gets the undivided attention of another adult, and knowing how offenders know how to manipulate that interest and that need of kids, and how that puts a child at a very vulnerable place.

Doug Fabrizio:
Let's take a question from the audience. Janel Mitchell is with us. Janel, go ahead.

Janel Mitchell:
My question is in regards to how safe it is on MySpace, how secure it is.

Anne Collier:
MySpace is showing a great deal of corporate responsibility actually. And parents really need to know that there are hundreds, literally hundreds of social networking sites out there. And some kids will have a public profile that mom and dad can see and they'll have a private profile that they hide from mom and dad, either in MySpace or somewhere else. So it's really important not to get too fixated on MySpace, even though it has gotten the vast majority of the public and media attention.

Doug Fabrizio:
I wonder, one thing you mention in your book is that young people are looking for a space apart. They want something that parents--whether they have access to it or not--aren't involved in. Umm, that's something they crave. They want to be left alone in some ways. Is that true?

Anne Collier:
Or among their peers. Yeah, and MySpace is rapidly becoming not that kind of space. So, you know, we know that law enforcement is all over MySpace and we know that parents are, and parents should be. Parents should be establishing their own accounts, which can be done in about five minutes. But they will find their spaces, and researchers are telling us that they are gonna

eventually move into other sites where they can sort of do their sort of secret teenager stuff, and then they'll have their MySpace account because there's so many communication tools and so many friends on it that they'll keep that too.

Doug Fabrizio:
Dr. Sanchez, this is a natural sort of thing, is it not, for young people to want to sort of be left alone, be off on their own?

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
Absolutely. Developmentally it's very normal for kids to kind of--you know, one term we use is individuate or begin to take on their own sense of responsibility, what's right and wrong. I think-- I'll take it from a more general sense-- I think as parents, as educators, as folks involved with teenagers and adolescents, one of the things we want to do is help them to make good decisions, to be good problem solvers. I mean, if we take it from a biological perspective, we know that the frontal lobe-- the part of our brain that makes all of our executive decisions doesn't fully form or fully develop until our early 20's.

So the fact that kids are still learning how to make decisions and so forth makes a lot of sense at that age, but I think we want to help them, encourage them to make good decisions.

Doug Fabrizio:
There's this ongoing question that keeps getting asked and asked, whether in this era or in generations past, and that is--how is it that you approach young people to get them to communicate what's really going on in their lives, the dangers they might be exposed to...

Jerry Buie:
You know, some of the topics that are very difficult for parents to talk to their kids about-- and sexuality came up in the first segment and you just brought it up-- if we're not willing to have those discussions with our kids and create dialogue, predators will. And I think that's part of the hook when these men are operating online is they find those places where they can get the kids to communicate and talk in that facade of creating trust. And so as parents, you know, I'm thinking about that responsibility of how do I get comfortable with these topics myself so that I can start communicating to my children about these issues.

Doug Fabrizio:
So predators, in some ways, see themselves as filling a vacuum that might be there, or a void. If they're not getting praise, if they're not getting acknowledgement, if they're not getting recognition?

Jerry Buie:
They know how to use that vacuum to their advantage.

Doug Fabrizio:
What do they want-- predators-- as you understand it? Do they want... I mean, is the ultimate ideal a face-to-face meeting, a sexual encounter?

Jerry Buie:
Yes. Understand--I work with people after they've been caught, and they're caught usually in the context of anticipating a meeting with a youth. And so that's the audience, or that's the clientele that I can speak to. And I believe that it is in their agenda as they start making those connections. A lot of these guys have some real social insecurities and phobias, and so they create a fantasy world with that 13- or 14-year-old, and it gives them a sense a confidence, a sense of companionship and connection. And so they complete that fantasy by wanting to arrange that hook up.

Doug Fabrizio:
Is that an impulsive move, or is it something that's generally pretty well thought out for predators?

Jerry Buie:
Both.

Doug Fabrizio:
Really?

Jerry Buie:
It depends on the offender that you're working with, or the predator. Some can be very impulsive and can jump right to that objective, and others will groom or build that level of confidence and trust where they will then work towards the connection.

Doug Fabrizio:
I want to get another question from our audience. This one comes from Lori McClure.

Lori McClure:
Yes, I was reading in the newspaper about a software program that MySpace is developing called The Zephyr. It sounds like it's intended to help parents know a little bit about their children's activity. But it says that it's only going to be able to give the user name, age and location that your children gave because they don't want it to be too restrictive or the children will start using other sites. And I'm just wondering if you're aware of any legislation that is being discussed to help regulate these sites or to help parents to have more right in obtaining the information about their children.

Anne Collier:
Well, by law, MySpace cannot disclose a private profile to anyone, so there would have to be legislation that empowers these social sites to disclose private profiles. And that's something parents need to be aware of.

Everybody talks about how great privacy features are, but privacy's a double-edged sword in this space because if you turn on privacy, then only the people on your friends list can see your profile, and if a parent is not on the friends list, then the parent can't monitor what's going on. But it is a tool in the parent's tool box. It will be useful, I think, because some parents...

It won't reveal anything that a parent can't find out on MySpace anyway right now-- and that would probably be a good idea-- but it will help parents who somehow are intimidated about going on the site itself.

Doug Fabrizio:
You know, Lori's question raises a broader one, and that is whether or not young people have a right to privacy, I mean, in terms of the parents. Should they have things that parents don't have access to. Dr., how do you think about that?

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
You know, I think again, I think that's one of the kind of typical development processes that children, adolescents are going to go through. So my sense is that if parents don't give them privacy and work that out kind of in a way that, you know, makes sense for the family, they're going to look for that in other ways that it's gonna be more secretive that the parents aren't gonna know about. And my guess is that most parents will want to know about it in more of a collaborative way with their adolescent, right? Help them make good decisions, help them problem solve when things go wrong or right or whatever, as opposed to being clandestine, you know, secretive.

Doug Fabrizio:
Because you're betraying a trust.

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
Yeah, yeah.

Jerry Buie:
I have a 15-year-old daughter, and I'm thinking the principles of privacy are great, except for my daughter-- she's not allowed to have any...

[Laughing]

So, you know, I don't know the political edge of all this, but I'm thinking how much of this dialogue is very much reflective about the quality and nature of our relationships with our children. And the issue around what happens on the Internet in my mind is very symptomatic of the quality and nature of the relationship we have with our children.

Can we openly talk to them? Can we engage them, can we build levels of trust and confidence? Or are we distant and is there a separation? And so to me, a lot of this discussion-- I'm listening to it and I'm thinking, you know, really what we're getting down to is the quality of our parenting and how well we're doing that.

Doug Fabrizio:
Did I see a question here? Someone? Please.

Ron Andrews: So how is the best way to do monitoring? We know when our children are online, but we're not always there in the same room. You have to leave the room while they're online for a few minutes... How is the best way to do monitoring?

Anne Collier:
I don't think you have to watch them every minute. I think you'll know. You know, based on how well you know your child, how much monitoring he or she needs.

Doug Fabrizio:
You recommend-- I think, in fact, you do in the book-- parents considering getting their own MySpace profile.

Anne Collier:
Yeah, well, that's what the book's all about is to kind of tell people how. It's not rocket science. It's very, very easy. And you don't have to answer all the questions and you don't have to upload a photo. You can just quick establish a profile with, you know, fill out the little form, click "submit" and you're there. And then, have a household rule that says that I am on your friends list and I'm just gonna be checking in every now and then.

Doug Fabrizio:
Part of that, I guess, is coming to know the culture. If you're actually doing your own profile, you're gonna get a sense of the lingo, the jargon, the rituals, I guess?

Anne Collier:
Yeah, I publish a newsletter called netfamilynews.org. And the whole idea-- it's just a blog. The idea is to just link parents to kid-relevant and family-relevant tech news out on the Internet. And the idea, you know, as you read this stuff you start developing the vocabulary and knowing what questions to ask.

Doug Fabrizio:
So a level of freedom, but with boundaries.

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
Sure. My guess is that, uh, you know, most parents in the audience-- their kids probably know more about the computers and the Internet than they do. So you can also make that interactive. If there are components that the parents want to know about, you can ask your kids to teach you part of that as an interactive process and you're also communicating about it in a positive way.

Anne Collier:
Yeah. And the kids also know that obviously you know something about it as well, and it's not as foreign or as a mystery as they might think.

Doug Fabrizio:
Anyone have any questions? Yes, please.

Kim Blacka: What can you do if your children have already figured out or have already started doing the erasing their history and erasing their browser so you can't access what they've gone to?

Anne Collier:
Something might be up. You probably need to sit down and talk with them about why they're erasing the browser history cuz it looks like they have something to hide.

Julie Keyes:
You mentioned that good parenting skills are important, but what if you have a rebellious child? That's not always going to work with every individual child that you have.

Jason Burrow-Sanchez:
Well, it's really I think gonna depend on your own situation in terms of your own parenting styles that you have, the temperament of the child and the situation that you're dealing with. So you're right. It is gonna depend... If you look at the research literature, there are some general principles, but it doesn't always mean that everything's gonna apply to you.

Doug Fabrizio:
Does anyone have anything else? I want to give you an opportunity. Yes, Laura Price.

Laura Price:
I have a lot of kids that hang out at my house and they're in and out. A lot of them don't have a lot of parental supervision. Is there anything that we can do just as neighbors and people in the community to watch out for these kids or kind of guide them into better directions?

Anne Collier:
It sounds like you're a great parent if kids like to hang out at your house. And, you know, it probably comes quite naturally to be interested in those kids and ask them questions. But I think it's also important for parents to talk to each other. It really does take a village now because kids can just kind of go anywhere and access anything. They have so much freedom. And so we all kind of need to help each other out, and then we've got people like Jason and Jerry to help us out too!

Adriel Burkholder:
I have a question for Jerry. Jerry, from what you've heard tonight, are there any additional things that you think that we can do as parents that you've heard from the sexual predators, from the opposite end--maybe clues that they've given.

Jerry Buie:
Even though we've been stressing this quality of relationship with your children, which is a very important issue to be aware of... When I work with offenders, I'm very much aware... I call them Master Manipulators. I mean, they know how to get in. And there's a part of me sitting here saying, you know, if a child has been victimized, parents go through this process of blaming themselves anyways, and so that's not to say that every victim is a product of a bad parenting situation. Cuz understand, these guys are good and they know how to manipulate a child to get

what they're looking for. But I do think if we're looking in preventative terms, the quality of relationship with our children is probably the one thing that we have the most control and power to deal with.

Doug Fabrizio:
Thank you all. To truly understand the appeal of the Internet for young people-- to find out how they use it, what they want from it-- you've got to go to them directly, like these teens that we met recently at Tooele High School.

Jeff Bryant:
I would be willing to bet 95 percent of the student body has a MySpace account. Some claim they're barely on it, some claim they're a lot on it, but it's different than 15-18 years ago when I was in high school.

Narrator: To you, high schools of the 21st century may seem like, well, a complex web of text messages, Internet social networks and online homework.

Tooele High School fits this sketch pretty well, and it could typify any of your teen's schools. In fact, most teens at this high school are probably a lot like your teens-- they know more about the computer than you--and they spend a lot more time online than you.

Jeff Bryant teaches at Tooele High School and he knows firsthand about kids and technology. One course he teaches is a TV journalism class--Buff TV.

Jeff Bryant:
Buff-TV--what we do is, everyday that we have this class, we broadcast a news show out to the student body. And so I've got 14 students in here and they are the face of the school, I guess, for lack of a better term.

Narrator: Five of these Buff-TV students talked with us about their Internet use. All of them consider the web a useful tool, while some view it as a social necessity.

Brandon Kummer:
MySpace is a really big thing here, so like a lot of kids are addicted, so I'd say some of them go up to like five hours, maybe eight.

Jerrica Salazar:
You can keep, like, in contact with your friends, and, like, I talk to my cousins on there too and they live in, like, different states.

Preston Fawson:
If there's ever anything, like if I want to meet someone new, I guess, like I could just talk to them if I wanted. I don't necessarily have to meet 'em in person.

Sadie Palmer:

I know people do MySpace all the time. I don't have time to do that, plus my parents don't think it's very safe.

Baylee Sorenson:
It's kinda dangerous; you never know who's out there.

Narrator: Are these teens being safe?

Brandon Kummer:
I stay away from meeting new people on the Internet. It's just too random.

Sadie Palmer:
You don't know who's really there, so yeah, I just stick with people I know.

Preston Fawson:
I met some people, like I had a basketball game or a baseball game and they'd go watch my game, but it could be dangerous if it was like a predator, but I could protect myself, I'm pretty sure.

Baylee Sorenson:
I do have some friends and they'll put where they live, how old they are, what high school they go to, and I don't think that's very smart because people can easily find them that way.

Narrator: What does your teen do online while you aren't looking? Have you talked with them about their Internet use? And if you are going to talk with them about the web, are they really going to listen?

Baylee Sorenson:
I don't have a MySpace because I don't like them and my mom won't let me have it. She's like, "Do you have a MySpace?" I'm like, "yeah," and she's like, "you can't have it. I don't want you to have one," so I went in and just shut it down.

Preston Fawson:
I don't think that my mom knew that I was using MySpace to meet people sometimes, but yeah, she probably wouldn't have been too happy about that.

Jerrica Salazar:
My parents--they're not really computer literate. They are still kind of learning how to do a lot of the things, so I have to do a lot of the things for my mom, and she, like, sees my MySpace and there's nothing wrong with that. So she doesn't, like, have a problem with me using the Internet just because I think she thinks I'm, like, responsible with using it.

Sadie Palmer:
Really all they've told me is, ya know, don't go into those chat rooms where I could get in trouble, or don't get a MySpace or they won't let me. For the most part they trust me because they know that I'm not gonna do that stuff.

I think there are parents that aren't as concerned about their kids being on the Internet. I don't think they realize how dangerous it could be.

Narrator: So what is the secret to keeping your teens safe online? Better filters? Less Internet access? Or none at all? Jeff Bryant says parents hold the key.

Jeff Bryant:
As always, is the same it was when we were kids-- communication. Be a pain in the butt, you know. These kids always talk to me, you know—"mom has to know where I am every second"… Yeah...You know, with the greater freedom they have with the cars or with the Internet or whatever comes greater responsibility and more checking. That's just parenting.

Doug Fabrizio:
Remember the free resource packet we're offering has tips for parents and a glossary to help you understand the language of Internet culture. To get it, go to the Netsafe Website at: www.netsafeutah.org or you can call 1-800-866-5852.

Finally tonight, let's take the conversation beyond the abstract. We're joined by some of the families--parents who have already had to confront some of the threats of the Internet.

Adriel Burkholder is with us. He's a businessman who works in the technology industry. In fact, he's developed a curriculum on technology for parents. He also happens to have four kids at home.

Leslie Dalton is with us from American Fork. She's been involved in a variety of community awareness programs related to Internet safety. She became interested when she saw the effect on her own family, and Leslie has three teenagers.

John Krutsch is also with us, a parent of six kids. He's created his own program to monitor his children's Internet use. And welcome to you all. Thanks very much for being with us.

Well, I wanted to get you to react, if you would, as parents to what you're hearing so far. What do you make of the conversation so far? John?

John Krutsch:
You know, I think a lot of the information has been very useful, and frankly something I wish I would have known back when my older children had started to get online. You know, it seems almost common sensical to, you know, to be in the room when they're online, and to do these simple things--to communicate with your children. As kind of a knee-jerk reaction, you know, in my own case I created this program that would record everything they do, so big brother was watching them. I captured every key stroke, and if they didn't hit a key stroke within 30 seconds, it would take a screen shot of everything. And I'd have all these pictures and I could monitor

everything. You know, and my kids knew that and I even showed it to them. I said, "Look at this really cool program I did. I can see what you're doing." And we would have other programs like, "Look, I'm on my computer and I'm controlling your computer and so I can see you and I know what you're doing." but, you know, it really still didn't deter them in the long run.

My oldest daughter got into situations where she was chatting inappropriately with folks online, and I told her, you know-- cuz I was watching-- you know, I said, you know, "That's probably some dirty old man you're chatting with," and it turned out it wasn't. It was actually a teenager in Indiana that she was chatting with, but it set a precedent there.

Doug Fabrizio:
Leslie, what about you? How are you reacting to the conversation so far?

Leslie Dalton:
Well, I'm feeling pretty good about where we're at right now because I think that we have implemented a lot of good strategies and we're doing a lot of the things that have already been talked about and we're keeping our kids pretty safe.

I'm wishing that I hadn't been so strict in the beginning when our kids first started getting on the Internet because it freaked me out and I was scared and I was learning all of these terrible things that were gonna happen to my kids, and, so I think that we were almost too strict and monitored them a little too much in ways that kind of made them pull back and maybe even want to be more secretive. And so I think that if I had to do it over again--which I don't--but it would be nice to go back and say, I can be a little more calm about this and just work with what I know now.

Doug Fabrizio:
Adriel, what about you?

Adriel Burkholder:
My oldest is 8 years old and she's starting to receive assignments in school to go on the Internet to look up things for her homework. At first that really kind of bugged me. I'm like-- she's not old enough yet. But it was a great opportunity to teach her about the Internet, and she's already been on it, but this gives her a little bit more opportunity to search for things.

It scares me as a parent, but I have felt, through this conversation tonight, that it starts way before they ever type MySpace.com. It's my interaction with my child far before the time she ever reaches her computer and my relationship with her then controlling what she does on the Internet.

Because I may be able to control her here at my home, but at the public library I have no control and she's on her own. But I'm encouraged and I have hope.

John Krutsch:
I think that's what paramount is the whole relationship with your children. I have my second oldest daughter here with me tonight, and you know, she was aware of the problems that we had

with her older sister, and, you know, even if you were to ask my youngest child, you know, what are the Internet rules in the house, they can spit it out verbatim. I think we're having better success with them obeying those types of rules. And I think that's the key to the relationship there is they know what's expected of them, and that as a parent you're trusting enough that they're gonna eventually do the right thing. You know, sure there's gonna be some teenage exploration.

Doug Fabrizio:
Question from the audience. Tami Andrews, go ahead.

Tami Andrews:
My question's kind of different related. We've talked a lot about MySpace. And I do mostly research on the Internet, so I was wondering if anybody had any suggestions on how to stay safe. I mean, there's things you do-- you don't click on pop-ups and things like that, but does anybody have any other suggestions on basic ways to stay safe with doing Internet searches instead of just communication.

Doug Fabrizio:
Good question. Well, let me put it to the parent group first of all. Adriel?

Adriel Burkholder:
I'll tell you what I do to keep safe on the Internet. I have a filter installed to filter my Internet access so that I don't miss a keystroke. Pornographers and those out there will try to play traps and lay traps for individuals. I also, if I'm not sure about a website, I will "Google" it first to find a little summary about it. Now, that doesn't always work either, but I think with those things in place and having the computer in a public area, you're better able to discern where you're going and what you're looking up than without. But I prefer to have the filter company block anything that I don't want to see that I may accidentally click on.

Leslie Dalton:
Earlier we talked about-- or it was discussed about how kids know so much more than we do. And I think--I've found that when I know something more than they do from a totally different angle, they really gain respect for me and it scares them a little bit, and they think, ohhh! For example, I put everything on the child protection registry--our cell phones and instant messaging accounts and email accounts and all of that, and then I tell my kids about it. Well, they didn't know anything about that. They might know everything about MySpace, but they don't know about that. And so they're looking at me like, oh, you really do know what you're talking about, even though I have no idea what all they could be involved in. So they, just kind of attacking it from that angle kind of helps them to say, I should probably watch what I'm doing, at home at least.

Doug Fabrizio:
And thanks for joining us this evening. Don't forget, you can get that free resource packet through NetSafe Utah by calling: 1-800-866-5852 or visit the website site at

www.netsafeutah.org you can download this entire program and you can read transcripts of the interviews.

For KUED, I'm Doug Fabrizio. Thanks for joining us. Good night.

Announcer: Funding for "NetSafe Utah: Cybersafe Your Teens" is provided in part by the Utah State Legislature, through a grant from the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice...and by the members of KUED. Thank you!