

Some Thoughts on Internet Safety

from Peter Barnosky

1. Beware of free clipart sites, free screensaver sites, or any sites that require you to install something in your browser in order to use their images. This is almost always a source of spyware, adware, or virus'. This includes free smileys or free Zwinkies.

2. Invest in protective software, like Antivirus, Spyware Doctor, etc. It costs money yearly, but helps keep your computer clean. Learn how to use your computer's built-in protections in order to maintain security. Keep your operating system up-to-date.

3. Nothing on the Internet is private, there is no such thing. You are tracked, and can be hunted down if you engage in bad behavior, this includes chat rooms, etc. Don't do or act online in a way differently then you do in real life. You are NOT anonymous, and some people take things personally.

4. Avoid people that appear overly interested in you in a short period of time. Friendships in real life start slow and grow over time, that's the way it should be online too. People looking for too much personal information too quickly are fishing for easy targets, and not wasting their time by dragging things out.

5. Don't arrange to meet someone from the Internet, ever. If you do, have a safe plan, let your parents know or even go with you. Don't just hop a plane or bus and travel somewhere!

6. Completely ignore anyone who starts getting fresh, or starts sending dirty pictures. Don't respond to them, or give them the time of day. Don't even say goodbye, just don't respond to them anymore.

7. Its easy to be charming and attractive while writing text on the screen. It is really easy to get attached to people from what they can type. Be careful.

8. REMEMBER, whatever you do online, when you think you're alone, private, and anonymous, GOD sees and knows what you are doing (Proverbs 5:21).

9. Don't behave differently on the Internet then you would behave in real life. Be yourself. Behaving badly on the Internet, flirting, being sexual, etc., will attract the types of people that you would not want to associate with.

10. There are a lot of misfits are on the Internet, people with psychological problems, people who can hide behind their computer because in real life they are odd and have problems interacting with others.

11. The Internet is real, not virtual. Don't let anyone convince you that bad behavior is OK on the internet because its not actually "real."

12. People can easily and quickly latch on to someone on the Internet. Whether you want it to happen or not, someone might "instantly" fall in love with you, and THRUST themselves into your real life. That could mean stalkers, people using the tools on the Internet to find out your personal information, people showing up at your doorstep wanting to meet you, people showing up at work, people calling you, etc. There are dangerous people out on the Internet, looking for victims. Use the Internet responsibly.

13. Don't maintain SECRET relationships on the Internet. Let some of your real family members, real friends, know who you are associating with on the Internet. Rely on their advice; sometimes other people can pick up on warning signs that can help protect you. If you have to keep it secret, something is wrong to begin with!

14. Find an older, more mature family member or Christian friend that you can trust to discuss what happens on the Internet, let them help be your guide to keeping you safe.