Cybercitizen Challenge

In The Eye of the Beholder

Guiding level: Pathfinders / Rangers
Topic: Online safety

This activity requires computers with an Internet connection.

In this activity girls use a self-questionnaire and guided discussion to reflect on how their Internet activities may leave them vulnerable to online risks.

Preparation

- Photocopy the handout A Few Questions… for each of the girls in your group
- Print and cut out each "Fact" from the Facts Sheet handout; fold it and write the number of the question it relates to on the back.

At your meeting

Distribute the A Few Questions… handouts and ask the girls to answer them by circling the answer they most agree with. Explain that they will not have to share their answers to the third question unless they wish to.

Reviewing the answers

Question 1:

When I have a personal or intimate problem, I would rather:
- *Talk to my parents*
- *Talk to my friends*
- *Talk anonymously to an anonymous person online, in a virtual environment or discussion forum*

- Ask for a show of hands for each answer.
- Before starting a discussion, ask two girls to read the facts from the Facts Sheet that relate to this question.
- Once the facts have been read, start a discussion with the whole group.

  Key points:

  ⇒ Confiding to somebody online may take you further than you first intended (for example, meeting that person in the real world). Online predators are very good at using young people's trusting nature to build a strong relationship: they appear to be

sympathetic and friendly, but their reasons for wanting to be your friend may not be in your best interest.

$\Rightarrow$ You are never totally anonymous on the Internet. Any information about yourself that is posted online can by used to electronically track you down.

Go further: Ask the girls to imagine three tricky "leading questions" that might be used to get personal information about someone.

Question 2:

When I post something on my social networking site page:
- o *Anybody can see it*
- o *Only my friends can see it because I made sure I restricted the access to my page only to them*

- Ask for a show of hands for each answer.
- Before starting a discussion, ask four girls to read the facts from the Facts Sheet that relate to this question.
- Once the facts have been read, start a discussion with the whole group.

Key points:

$\Rightarrow$ Use the privacy settings for your social networking pages so that only people you know (and want to) can see your page.

$\Rightarrow$ Even with privacy settings in place, there's no guarantee that what you post on social networking sites is private. In fact, you don't even own what you post – the website does! To avoid embarrassment, your safest bet is never post anything you wouldn't want the whole world to see.

Question 3:

Remind the girls that this question is meant to help them think more critically about what they post online – they don't need to share their answers.

Let's imagine for a moment that, due to a problem on your social networking site, all of the content you currently have online went public.

What might the people listed below think of you if they came across the content of your page?

- *A university administrator who is looking for information about you to decide whether or not to give you a room on campus.*
- *An employer who is thinking of hiring you and wants to know if you would be hard working, well behaved and dedicated to your job.*

- Before starting a general discussion, ask two girls to read the two facts from the <u>Facts Sheet</u> that relate to this question.
- Given these facts, what guidelines or rules would the girls suggest for content they put online?

  Key points:

  ⇒ When you post something online, it can potentially be there forever, even if you delete or remove it. So you need to be very careful about what you put online, because even if it is not a problem right now, it may become one in a few years time.
  ⇒ Remember, if you – or your friends! – *don't* put anything online you would be embarrassed about later on, then you can't be embarrassed!

Facts Sheet

Facts related to question 1

Fact: Online predators seduce their targets through attention, affection, kindness and even gifts. They often devote a lot of time, money and energy to this effort. Predators listen to and sympathize with kids' problems and try to ease young people's inhibitions by appealing to their interest in romance and adventure.

Fact: Those who face the most danger from online predators are youth, ages 13-15, who are involved in high-risk behaviours, including talking and/or flirting with strangers and posting intimate information in open Web environments such as social networking sites.

Facts related to question 2

Fact: In 2007, a 17-year-old girl in Toronto left her social networking account open when she left the computer station briefly. While she was away, another student went onto her site, changed her passwords and then uploaded a nude photo of the girl from her privately protected section to the main page so all users could see it.

Fact: In January 2008 it was discovered that a backdoor in MySpace's architecture let *anyone* who was interested see the photographs of some users with private profiles -- including young people under the age of 16. This happened despite the fact that MySpace had assured its users that only people on their friends list would be able to access them.

Facts related to question 3

Fact: Universities and employers commonly "google" potential students and employees to evaluate them.

Fact: The social networking site Nexopia's privacy policy states that **"*By producing content for distribution in any public area of Nexopia, you automatically grant … an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, worldwide license to use any uploaded content…"***

…in other words, they own your stuff and can use it any way they want.

MySpace isn't much better. Its privacy policy states that ***"a back-up or residual copy of the content posted by you may remain on the MySpace.com servers after you have removed the content from the services, and MySpace.com retains the rights to those copies."***

...which means they own copies of your stuff, even after you've removed it from their website.

A few questions…

Question 1

When I have a personal or intimate problem, I would rather:
- o Talk to my parents
- o Talk to my friends
- o Talk anonymously to an anonymous person online, in a virtual environment or discussion forum

Question 2

When I post something on my social networking site page:
- o Anybody can see it
- o Only my friends can see it because I made sure I restricted the access to my page only to them

Question 3

This answer is for you and is not intended to be shared. Its only purpose is to allow you to see the content you put online from a new perspective.

Let's imagine for a moment that, due to a problem on your social networking site, all of the content you currently have online went public.

What might the people listed below think of you if they came across the content of your page?

- A university administrator who is looking for information about you to decide whether or not to give you a room on campus.
- An employer who is thinking of hiring you and wants to know if you would be hard working, well behaved and dedicated to your job.