

Generation Web Part 6: What are we going to do about it?

Nick Sharp

In this series of articles, I have tried to sketch out the changing world that our young people are moving into. The final question for us, whether we're parents, grandparents or concerned adults, is: What are we going to do about it?

There are three areas where we can do something useful.

Education

The first is to learn. Perhaps we need to find out more about the wired world around us. Facebook, Twitter, Google and Amazon might not mean much to us, but perhaps you know someone who can teach you? Maybe your children or your grandchildren would sit down with you and help you learn. As you learn, of course, you are finding out what they are up to.

And now the clever bit: all learning is a two-way street. You have a chance to respond with your values to the things you are being shown. You can ask questions like, "How do you know when you can trust what you're seeing?" "Where is the truth in all of this?" "What does it mean to call someone your 'friend'?" As you ask these questions, you'll be helping your young friend to critically reflect on something they might otherwise take for granted. "Oh, Gran, everyone does this. It's perfectly safe!"

Action

When you were young, you were probably taught the Green Cross Code. Road safety campaigns in the 60's and 70's are thought to have significantly reduced injuries to children on our roads.

Below is the 21st century equivalent – a Green Cross Code for the Internet. It deserves to be as well known as its road safety equivalent.

Here are some more practical ideas and advice, mainly for parents, or those directly responsible for looking after young people.

1. Set boundaries

Enforce some limits on where and when your children access the internet. Ideally, don't let them use the internet in their bedrooms. This means persuading them to keep their smartphones and games consoles downstairs! Learn how to set parental controls and privacy settings, and check regularly that they haven't been changed.

2. Share knowledge

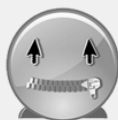
Try it yourself! Visit the sites that your young people are using, to get an idea what it's really like. If you allow them to use social networking sites like Facebook, make sure you join too and ask to be their friend, so

**CLICK CLEVER
CLICK SAFE**

UKCCIS
UK COUNCIL FOR CHILD INTERNET SAFETY

Welcome to the Click Clever Click Safe campaign, brought to you by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety.

The internet opens up a wonderful world of entertainment, opportunity and knowledge. To help your children enjoy the internet safely, we have developed the **Click Clever Click Safe Code**. It's been designed to act as an everyday reminder of simple good behaviours, to help you and your children avoid common risks online.



ZIP IT

Keep your personal stuff private and think about what you say and do online.



BLOCK IT

Block people who send nasty messages and don't open unknown links and attachments.



FLAG IT

Flag up with someone you trust if anything upsets you or if someone asks to meet you offline.

Use the Code when you talk to your children about the internet - it will help keep them safe online.

All Saints Alive

that you can see what they're posting.

3. Avoid secrets

Don't let the internet become a place where secrets can be kept. Our family has a little custom whereby once a month or so, we sit around the meal table and look at each other's texts on our phones. The idea is to promote an ethos within the family that deals openly and honestly with each other, where problems are shared and secrets avoided. It also means that nobody thinks that a text message is a safe place to keep a secret.

4. Stay talking with young people

I'm realistic enough to know that enforcing some of these rules may lead to battles with your children! Do pick your battles carefully, and give ground in certain areas in order to establish some firm rules elsewhere. In particular, don't ban your children from the internet as a punishment; it'll just encourage them to go and use it at a friend's house, or to keep their internet use secret from you. If you can't enforce any of these rules, settle for keeping the lines of communication open. Accept that the days when you could control your child's life are gone (if they were ever here!) Only by maintaining trust can you keep your positive influence.

Conclusion

The final thing I want to say is "Don't panic!" The number of malicious users of the internet is tiny, and as always, most people are just making innocent use of a wonderful tool. But there is a difference between innocence and naiveté, and for the sake of our children, let's do what we can to help them make the most of this brave new world.

Barn Dance

At Holy Trinity Church, Bengo - Live Music with the Musicmakers at 7pm on Saturday 5th March 2011, in Bengo School Hall.

Adults £7 children FREE. Bring & share supper. Make a date in your diary to come along and join in the fun. Tickets from Libby Shillito 01992 583979


Lent Bible Study Sessions

The weeks of Lent, (March 9th to April 24th) will again provide an opportunity for Hertford and District churches to share together in Bible study. This was warmly recommended by Janet Scott in her talk to HDCT at the Quaker Meeting House in September.

The text to be followed in 2011 is 'Rich Inheritance - Jesus' legacy of love', a York course written by Bishop Stephen Cottrell. It looks to be excellent and very challenging. Details of the course can be found at www.yorkcourses.co.uk

Exact dates, times and locations will be available in mid February


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MASSIVE

AUDIOVISUAL QUIZ 2011

SATURDAY
5TH MARCH
7.30PM



SELE SCHOOL
HERTFORD

TICKETS - £10 (incl. fish & chips)
8 PEOPLE PER TABLE
FOR TICKETS/INFO CONTACT SARA ON
01992 509001 OR sara@ylherts.younglife.org

All proceeds to Young Life Hertford, UK reg Charity No. 1090515
& The St. Andrew's Centre, Hertford, UK reg Charity No. 1132540