

Hi –tech Danger

The growing appeal of online sites like MySpace and Facebook are raising fears and the eyebrows of parents all over. Like a couple whose teenage daughter developed a romantic relationship online with a much older man.

When her mother learned about it, she took her computer away. She also didn't let her use the Internet. She hoped the relationship would end. But, the daughter continued to speak with him using computers outside of her home.

The "romance" escalated to secret meetings for sex before it finally ended. The teen slipped into depression. She drew further away from friends and family. She then committed suicide.

The danger is real. Below are some tips to help you communicate with your hi-tech pre-teen and teen:

Talk to your child about what type of things they are sharing online. Ask them to make their profile "private" so only agreed upon people can see it.

Remember that most chatting online is harmless. In fact, children can learn important information about building healthy relationships online. Try not to see these sites as evil. You want your child to feel comfortable talking to you.

Ask what your child would do if chatting between online friends became uneasy. Be aware that chats can be used as a way of bullying, tracking or controlling your child. Encourage them to report this type of behavior to you, the website or a trusted adult.

Talk to your child about how much chatting is too much. They should not feel like their partner is watching their every move or constantly checking in on them.

If you suspect your child is involved in an unhealthy relationship online, talk to them about it. One of the best ways to learn about your child's' activities is by keeping the lines of communication open. You can also visit and suggest your child visit <http://www.thesafespace.org/> for more information.

If you are worried about your children and need help for them or yourself, call us.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf)

www.ndvh.org

All contact with the hotline is free and confidential.
Help is available in English and Spanish and many other languages.

You or your child can also call the National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline
1-866-9474
1-8660331-8453 TTY
www.loveisrespect.org

Online chats are also available.

All contact with the hotline and chats are free and confidential

Children can also get loveisrespect news and info about healthy relationships
by signing up for the blog or adding the teen line as a friend on MySpace or
Facebook