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Social Networking Safety

October 2011

Years ago, "social networking" was not even a recognized phrase and probably would have conjured up ideas such as going dancing, out to dinner and the like. Today, our "electronic" lifestyle of talking with friends and family through social networking sites, email, texting and other electronic means has impacted how we interact and ultimately, how we protect ourselves from becoming victims of crimes.

Most social networking sites have solid safety components in place, but **you** still have a responsibility for online safety. Your responsibility includes realizing that not everyone is your friend. While you may be able to control access to your online space, you never know when that "friend" will no longer be a friend. Or someone you thought was okay turns out to be a problem. The fact is, anything you put on your networking space COULD be vulnerable to distribution, intentionally or unintentionally.



Here are some safety tips for social networking site users, as well as parents and guardians who are monitoring their use by younger family members:

- Check the network's privacy settings and be sure you understand them and know what the security limitations are.
- Select passwords that are hard for others to figure out. Passwords are intended to be secret, even giving it to a close friend can put you at risk.
- A photo with your child's school jersey or logo is a giveaway as to where they attend school. Make sure none of the photos on the site will tip off the wrong person as to where the child goes to school.
- Friends aren't always as cautious with someone else's information. Placing something compromising in the form of photos or information on your social networking page could be innocently copied by a friend who sends it to another friend and it begins to circulate on the internet.
- Provide as little identifying information as possible on the site. Your friends and your children's friends know who you are, so there is no need to provide an abundance of personal information.
- Be careful posting dates and times of where you or your child will be. If the wrong person gets the information it could put the subscriber or their property in an unsafe situation.
- Meeting online can be a lot safer than meeting in the real world! Use extreme caution when meeting someone in person whom you have met online. For parents it's important to have a very specific conversation with your teenagers about the dangers of meeting someone in person, but it's also a warning flag for adults. If a decision has been made to meet someone, pick a place that's public and consider taking someone else with you or let someone know where you are going to be.



ConnectSafely
www.connectsafely.org

GetNetWise
www.getnetwise.org

Staysafe
www.staysafe.org

A month we would rather not recognize...

October is National Domestic Violence Prevention Month.

As unfortunate as it is that we have to recognize a month for such a disturbing topic, it's refreshing that we, as a nation, are taking a stand against these criminal acts and bringing to light the victimization that occurs all too often. Recognizing what it is, acknowledging that it occurs, uniting in prevention and helping those that are victims, is the most effective way to combat this ill of society.

It is estimated that one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime*. However, these criminal acts are not just violence perpetrated against women, but men are also victims of domestic violence. From mental abuse and threats to physical violence, all forms of domestic violence take a toll on their victims.



"Just get out!"

So much easier said than done... The key to domestic violence survival is getting out of the atmosphere of violence. However, as easy as it is for a friend or family member to say "just get out of it," victims know that it is not that easy.

Domestic violence, in most cases, is best described as a cycle of violence and while it generally increases in intensity and danger to the victim, there are periods where the abuse appears to have subsided, only to rebound, sometimes in a more dangerous and even deadly form. The victim may hear "I'm sorry", "I'll never do it again", "It was one time" and many other excuses, but they know that in many cases, those are false apologies and promises. Yet the cycle of violence continues because the victim returns to their abuser.

Why would any victim return to their abuser? Every case is somewhat different, but there are many common threads running through the stories of those victimized. There is a goodness of heart, that the victims want to try and "make it work" because they believe the apologies. There is a manipulative draw from the abuser where the victim feels as if they were the cause of the violence and need to return because it was all their fault.

Domestic violence is also a crime in which the victim feels a strong sense of embarrassment. Thoughts of embarrassment, failure and hopelessness run through the victim's mind and prevent them from taking the action that needs to be taken.

Combating domestic violence begins with knowing, accepting and understanding that NO ONE deserves to be abused. In far too many cases, the first violent act is just the beginning and professional help is needed.

- If you are aware of an in-progress incident of violence, please call 9-1-1 immediately.
- If you are in a relationship that is building in tension that you believe will lead to violent acts or mental or physical abuse, get help by contacting a resource. (See information below.)
- Remember that there can be other, less obvious victims of domestic violence. Children listening from their bedroom as one of their parents is abused will profoundly affect that young person.

DON'T TAKE IT! If you are the victim of violence, report the crime to us so that we may evaluate the situation and determine the most appropriate response. **SEEK HELP!** There are organizations that provide assistance for victims of domestic violence. Contact us or the National Domestic Violence Hotline listed below for referrals. **DON'T BE FOOLED!** In some cases the pleas for forgiveness are sincere, but in others, they are just a "timeout" until the next incident. Use caution in reconciliation and seek professional assistance.

Stopping the cycle of violence involves not only the victim, but in many cases the assistance of law enforcement, the courts, counselors, advisors, and advocates. If you are a victim or you may believe you will be one, act now.

National Domestic Violence Hotline (24 hours / 7 Day a Week)
1-800-799-SAFE Hearing Impaired TTY 1-800-787-3224

*National Coalition Against Domestic Violence statistic



Home Security 101 - It's Inventory Time!

Even our households need to have an "inventory" from time to time. Not necessarily to see how much is expended (that could be depressing!) but to know what and where the items of value are in our home in the event of a theft, fire or other disaster.

The home inventory is your opportunity to take a "tour" of your home and prepare a list of everything of value (or updating your current list) so that if something would happen you could provide law enforcement and insurance with the details of every item that is stolen or damaged.

Create a list that will include the following pieces of information for every item of value in your home:

- ✓ Location of item
- ✓ Make (who manufactured it)
- ✓ Model (name or number)
- ✓ Color
- ✓ Other descriptive items
- ✓ Purchase amount
- ✓ Serial number

You're not done yet! Now, take out the camera or video camera and take pictures/video of each of those items. This will assist greatly in proving replacement and identifying the items if they were found or recovered. Make a photocopy of your list/photos and keep one copy at home in a safe location and the other at a location other than your home (in case your home is lost in a disaster).



No Tricks Please, Treats Only!

In less than a month young people from throughout our community will be out ringing doorbells looking for treats. The fashions will, as always, range from the scary to the funny, with those special costumes that make us exclaim, "Well, that's a first, I've never seen that before!" However, it is important that all community members take an active role in making this fun evening safe for our young people. Regardless of whether you have a costumed little one, or attempting to look like a celebrity, or simply providing treats, each and every one of us has a role in Halloween safety.

For Parents of "Trick-or-Treaters"

- 🍁 Costumes should be brightly colored for better visibility on dark sidewalks and when crossing streets.
- 🍁 If your child wears a mask, make sure he or she can clearly see without any obstructions.
- 🍁 A parent should always accompany young candy seekers.
- 🍁 See and be seen — Carry a flashlight and have it on whenever crossing the street. Always cross at intersections, where drivers expect to see pedestrians.
- 🍁 Go to homes that you trust.
- 🍁 Inspect ALL candies and discard any that are questionable and all "homemade" products.



For Those Handing out Sweets

- 🍁 If you go out for the evening, drive extra cautiously. There will be more people crossing the street than usual and some may be difficult to see due to their costumes.
- 🍁 Look out before opening your front door. If you see someone or a group of supposed Halloween revelers that you don't feel comfortable opening up for, don't!
- 🍁 Provide only prepackaged food items.
- 🍁 Provide lighting to give the little goblins, witches and other candy seekers safe passage to and from your door.
- 🍁 Keep all lit candles in a safe position that will prevent them from coming in contact with a costume or candy-filled pillowcase!

For additional tips, The National Safety Council provides a detailed Halloween safety fact sheet, which can be found at

http://www.nsc.org/news_resources/Resources/Documents/Halloween_Safety.pdf



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IS THROUGH A GRANT PROVIDED TO THE
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