



It is common for parents to struggle with how to stay involved in their teen's online activity. Many parents wrestle with the question of how to balance their teen's need for privacy with their parental job to provide protection. This sheet serves as a guide for parents in managing this complex issue.

EXCITING TIME

Adolescence is a very important time in development; a time of enormous learning opportunity. Experiences during this period will shape who your teen becomes as an adult.



How do Parents Stay Involved in WHAT TEENS ARE DOING ONLINE?

“IT’S YOUR BUSINESS!”

Staying involved in teens’ online activity becomes increasingly difficult as youth seek greater independence from their parents. The most common area you find teens expanding their social world is through the Internet. Although not a simple process, parents must try to stay involved and supervise their adolescents online while still balancing their need for independence. Typically, teens are highly skeptical of parental involvement and questions, and will swiftly leap to the classic phrase, “It’s not your business!” — rest assured, “It’s your business!”

YOU’RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK

- It’s okay to feel frustrated.
- It’s a healthy sign that your adolescent is seeking privacy and more independence.
- You’re on the right track in wanting to stay involved.

It can be tempting to convince yourself that your teen is old enough to “handle” what comes their way. Adolescents can appear very mature and ready to take on the world. However, research on brain development shows this is simply not the case. Teen brains are still developing and they do not have the capacity to properly deal with all situations.

THERE IS GOOD NEWS

There are many ways to stay involved and increase your adolescent’s safety online without having to meet them head on. You probably have many protective factors already in place that increase their safety and help with identity formation. These include:

- **Using anti-virus and filtering software** (visit www.cybertip.ca) and keeping all software up to date
- **Reviewing sites your teen visits** and ensuring online diaries and profiles do not contain identifying personal information
- **Reinforcing the public nature of the Internet**
Once pictures or information are sent over the Internet, control over what happens to them is lost. Be mindful of what is sent.
- **Monitoring webcam use**
Inform your adolescent that pictures can be captured (freezing photos, recording video) by others without their knowledge. Be mindful of how the webcam is used and disconnect when not in use.

For more information about risk and protective factors visit www.kidsintheknow.ca.