

The Internet: Not a playground for children!

Originally, the internet was a military product. It was developed in the 1960s during the Cold War by the American military and was not intended for civil society, let alone for children and adolescents. For this reason there are no safety precautions for them at all!

To illustrate this: Imagine a city with libraries, restaurants, cinemas and parks where people meet and socialise. But there are red-light districts, high-crime zones, meeting places for drug addicts and other “no go” areas, as well. Would you let your child wander into this city just like that alone? Certainly not. Yet, the internet has become just that kind of city with “light” and “dark” places. **Protect your child!**

Did you know that it takes but a few clicks to get “hardest” pornography? **68 million searches a day, every day, are made for pornographic content on the internet – this corresponds to a quarter of all worldwide queries! On average children start to view pornography at the age of 11.** And where is your child surfing on the internet – do you really know?

Money Machine Internet

Enormous sums of money can be made on the internet. For example: Facebook, currently the most popular social network, made a profit of almost three billion US dollars in the year 2014. Yet, Facebook still comes at no cost for its users. So how is this astronomically high profit drawn? – With advertising! Facebook is collecting data about our private lives and our preferences and sells these to the advertising industry. “Personalised advertising” is the magic word, and with each click on the “Like” button Facebook knows a little more about us. It is well known that the most loyal customers are those who were gained early in their life as children or teenagers. Thus, you secure tomorrow’s profits...

Psychological effects

The internet offers a platform for those people who should not have any! Experts recognise a rapid increase in internet bullying, leading even to suicide. A representative survey of the German FORSA institute, which was conducted for the German Techniker health insurance company in 2011, show that every

Bear this in mind: When you get something for free, in truth you are not the customer – you are the product!

(Rule of thumb for internet users)

third adolescent between the age of 14 to 20 has already been bullied at least once on the internet. If bullying conventionally took place at school only, cyber bullying is much more extensive and thus also more dangerous. Due to the digital interconnectedness bullying is now also possible via the smartphone, e-mail and the social networks. Whenever and wherever! The victim can be harassed and tormented all around the clock. He or she has almost no chance to escape the bullying.

Facebook, Twitter and Co. make many, many children and teenagers unhappy. In the social networks a self-dramatising play is being produced which is often confounded with reality. The consequences are dramatic. You start comparing your life with that of your countless “friends”. What we frequently forget is this: On Facebook and Co. the best highlights of one’s own life are being shared, but very rarely the difficult parts. Researchers at the Technical University of Darmstadt and the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, have questioned hundreds of Facebook users and discovered something astonishing: **One third of those interviewed felt bad during and after using Facebook.** The interviewees stated that they were sad, lonely, tired or frustrated. The scientists consider envy of another’s presumed better

life to be the reason. To compensate the negative feelings a pronounced self-dramatisation takes place: You present your own life better than it is in reality – which in turn makes other users jealous. The experts speak of a strong spiral of jealousy. In addition, ever more people suffer from FOMO, the Fear Of Missing Out. Those who are not constantly online and reachable miss out on allegedly important things. This leads to enormous stress and pressure. But according to a 2014 study almost two thirds of 12 to 19-year-olds perceive the constant reachability and never ceasing information flood as problematic. Almost half of them themselves realise that they are spending too much time with their smartphone. This is an expression of the major addictive potential of the internet and the social networks. Many adolescents are literally losing themselves in the virtual world, and are losing interest in real life. Some even neglect their natural needs such as eating, drinking and sleeping.

What you can do

- As a first step, as parents, become knowledgeable yourself and then tell your child about the internet and especially about its dangers in order for them to know what he or she is getting involved with. Important: **The internet never forgets and forgets nothing: extremely personal pictures, declarations of love and so on: everything is and remains saved “forever”.**
- Chaperone your child on the internet (according to age); offer help.
- Regularly check your child’s social media security and privacy settings. You need to ensure that only “friends” can access your child’s content and information.
- Employ free browser add-ons to block certain areas on the internet. (Add-ons allow you additional

browser functions. Search the internet for “Chrome Add-ons” or “Firefox Add-ons.”) Alternatively there is also software (free or at additional cost), that enables you to, for example, set computer and internet hours for your child or to block certain internet areas as well as monitor your child’s use of the computer. (You may find suitable software on the internet by, for example, searching for “child protection software.”)

- Build alliances with other parents. When your child is not the only one who has to renounce something it can be a much better way to handle the prohibition. This way you can prevent peer pressure.
- Do not put a computer in your child’s bedroom. Position the computer in a place where your child is not alone and where you can always see what he or she is doing.
- Confiscate smartphones and tablets in the evening. No child needs a mobile phone or tablet in his or her room at night. Moreover, these devices are an enormous distraction and, due to their technical radiation, may not only severely disturb a peaceful sleep but also trigger illnesses (i.e. allergies, tinnitus, in extreme cases also brain tumours).
- You may find further information about this unnatural electromagnetic radiation in our brochure “Microwaves – Protect yourself and your family from harmful radiation!” and in other publications of The World Foundation for Natural Science (www.naturalscience.org).
- Create media-free time. Set a good example yourself by switching off and leaving your smartphone, tablet or computer once in a while.

“The idea that an app or an iPad can better teach my kids to read or to do arithmetic, that’s ridiculous.”

(Alan Eagle, Executive communications employee at Google. He is sending his kids to an anthroposophical Waldorf school.)

- **Children who are losing themselves on the internet are looking for attention and devotion. Show your children the beauty of the real world. Give them your time in order to experience together that which we would otherwise all miss out on – real life!**

Numbers against despair

At the following phone numbers children and adolescents may anonymously receive reliable, free counselling and help:

USA: 1-800-4-A-CHILD or 1-800-422-4453

United Kingdom: 0800 1111

Australia: 1800 55 1800

Canada: 1-800-668-6868

We are always happy to answer more questions!

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Internet and Social Media A GUIDEBOOK FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

