

# INTERNET INFO: THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE UGLY

by Kris Jensen

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*Let me say again: neither technology nor rapid change in or of itself is good or evil; the real challenge is to understand both within the context of the eternal plan of happiness.*

– Elder David A. Bednar

## The Good

- Talk with your teens about what they can and cannot do online.
- Be reasonable and set reasonable expectations. Try to understand their needs, interests, and curiosity.
- Be open with your teens and encourage them to come to you if they encounter a problem online.
  - If they tell you about someone or something they encountered, your first response should not be to blame them or take away their Internet privileges. Work with them to help avoid problems in the future, and remember – your response will determine whether they confide in you the next time they have a problem, and how they learn to deal with problems on their own.
- Learn Everything You Can About the Internet
  - Ask your teens to show you what's cool. Have them show you great places for teens and fill you in on areas that you might benefit from as well. Make “surfing the net” a family experience. Use it to plan a vacation, pick out a movie, or check out other family activities. Make this one area where you get to be the student and your child gets to be the teacher.
- Think before blocking
  - It is important to realize that filtering programs cannot protect your child from all dangers in cyberspace. To begin with, no program can possibly block out

every inappropriate site. What's more, it's possible, in some cases, for the programs to block sites that are appropriate. If you use a filtering program, you should re-evaluate it periodically to make sure it's working for your family.

- Filtering programs are not a substitute for good judgment or critical thinking. With or without filters, children and their parents need to be “net savvy” and communicate with each other.
- Remember, the best filter is the one that runs in teens' heads, not on the devices they use.

*Today I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. The concerns I raise are not new; they apply equally to other types of media, such as television, movies, and music. But in a cyber world, these challenges are more pervasive and intense. I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to produce high fidelity and that promote degrading and evil purposes.*

–Elder David A. Bednar

## The Bad

A survey commissioned by Cox Communications and NCMEC found that:

- Over half (51%) of parents either do not have or do not know if they have software on their computer(s) that monitors where their teenager(s) go online and with whom they interact.
- 42% of parents do not review the content of what their teenager(s) read and/or type in chat rooms or via Instant Messaging.

- Teenagers who Instant Message use chat lingo to communicate and parents don't know the meanings of some of the most commonly used phrases. 57% don't know LOL (Laughing Out Loud), 68% don't know BRB (Be Right Back), and 92% don't know A/S/L (Age/Sex/Location).
- 95% of parents couldn't identify common chat room lingo that teenagers use to warn people they're chatting with that their parents are watching. Those phrases are POS (Parent Over Shoulder) and P911 (Parent Alert).
- Nearly three out of 10 (28%) of parents don't know or are not sure if their teens talk to strangers online.
- 30% of parents allow their teenagers to use the computer in private areas of the house such as a bedroom or a home office. Parents say they are more vigilant about where their teen(s) go online if the computer is in a public area of the household.
- 58% of parents surveyed say they review the content of what their teenager(s) read and/or type in chat rooms or via Instant Messaging; 42% do not.

*If the adversary cannot entice us to misuse our physical bodies, then one of his most potent tactics is to beguile you and me as embodied spirits to disconnect gradually and physically from things as they really are. In essence, he encourages us to think and act as if we were in our premortal, unembodied state. And, if we let him, he can cunningly employ some aspects of modern technology to accomplish his purposes. Please be careful of becoming so immersed and engrossed in pixels, texting, ear buds, twittering, online social networking, and potentially addictive uses of media and the Internet that you fail to recognize the importance of your physical body and miss the richness of person-to-person communication. Beware of digital displays and data in many forms of computer-mediated interaction that can displace the full range of physical capacity and experience.*

-Elder David A. Bednar

### **The Ugly**

Children of all ages are flocking to the Internet. More than 30 million of those younger than 18 use the Internet.

It is important to note the types of dangers that children may be susceptible to on the Internet:

- nudity or other sexually explicit material
- hate group or racist web sites
- promotional material about tobacco, alcohol, or drugs
- graphic violence
- information on satanic or cult groups
- recipes for making bombs or other explosives
- cyberstalking or harassment that includes repeated and unwanted contact through the Internet that is rude or threatening
- viruses to other computers that could damage or destroy your hard drive
- sexual predators may target children online while maintaining relative anonymity

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