Internet safety for kids
Video discussion guide

After showing the video, discuss the following questions and stories. Hand out the accompanying Tip Sheet so parents can refer to it during the discussion. Provide the Family Media Agreement for parents to take home and discuss with their family.

What's going on with your kids?

Questions to encourage parents to share experiences, concerns, and solutions

1   When you think about Internet safety, what comes to mind? Predators? Inappropriate exposure to sex, violence, and advertising? Kids oversharing? What concerns you most?

2   At what age do you think it's okay for kids to go online alone? Join a community like Club Penguin or Facebook? Engage in online gaming?

3   The Internet can be accessed at school, friends' houses, and increasingly from mobile devices. How will you help your children navigate a world where they can go online almost anytime, anywhere, and without you?

4   What kinds of experiences have you had with your own children as they explore the Internet that have been challenging or raised concerns? How did you handle the situations and talk to your children?

5   What are the things that stop you from being really involved in your kids' online lives?

6   What might you want to include in your Family Media Agreement? What do you think your children would include?

What would you do?

Stories to discuss, role play, and deepen conversation

Elementary school child

Third-grader Naomi recently joined a virtual world and has been playing with a group of four close friends almost every day. She works in a virtual hamburger shop and has earned lots of virtual cash that she's saving to decorate her house.

Yesterday, after logging on, she came running to her mom in tears saying that all her in-game money had disappeared. "Did you give your password to any of your friends?" her mom asked. "No, but yesterday Kookeroo22 said that if I gave him my password he'd give my house a really cool makeover." Naomi's mom suspects that another child has used Naomi's password and sold her things. Naomi is upset and a little scared.

>   How can Naomi's mom use this experience to teach her daughter some of the basics of Internet safety?

>   What are the key messages and ways to communicate with young kids so that they listen and learn without becoming too fearful?

Middle school tween

While cleaning her eighth grade daughter Rachel's room, Linda is shocked to find Rachel's Facebook profile staring at her from the computer screen. Linda had no idea that her daughter, who is not yet 14, was on Facebook. This is the first time Linda has been on Facebook herself. It's clear that Rachel has invested hours and hours building her profile and some of it is quite creative and wonderful. There are lists of her favorite music, movies, books; poems she's written; messages to and from friends spread over the wall; and 17 photos. Rachel has picked a sweet picture of herself at age 6 for her profile picture.

Linda clicks through the other photos and is relieved to find that none are sexually provocative or inappropriate. But then she notices that Rachel has listed every bit of her personal information on her profile page – name, cell phone number, birthdate, school, address – everything! Desperately searching for the profile privacy settings, Linda finally finds a button in the top right corner, clicks on it, and discovers that Rachel's privacy controls are set to My Network and Friends. That sounds pretty private but actually it means that Rachel's profile is viewable by everyone in Milwaukee (the city Rachel lives in IS HER NETWORK). When Rachel comes home from school that afternoon, Linda confronts her about the Facebook profile.

> How would you handle this conversation? What would be your biggest concerns?

> How can parents teach kids to self-reflect before they self-reveal?

> What action would you take or ask Rachel to take to protect her safety and privacy?

> Many parents feel clueless when it comes to the Web sites their kids visit and at times that makes them less comfortable and confident to bring up issues about Internet safety with their kids. How can parents gain the knowledge and confidence to overcome this challenge?

High school teen

Sixteen-year-old Sam loves to go on Teen Second Life (a virtual world where kids can communicate with one another through avatars). His parents have seen Teen Second Life and they think it's a good outlet for him. One day, when talking about his online friends, Sam mentions to his mom that he's going to meet – in person – one of his online buddies from Second Life.

His mom is worried because she doesn't know the person, but Sam insists, "He graduated a couple years ago from our high school and now works fixing computers. I've been friends with him for a long time on Second Life. He knows how to write his own computer games, so he can teach me. And anyway, my friends are coming with me to his place."

> Should Sam's parents let him meet this online friend in real life? If so, under what terms?

> For teens, online friends sometimes feel closer than real-life friends. Why might this be?

> Do you think it would be different if Sam were a girl?