

Family Insider — *My Daughter and the Stalker*

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“The least expensive education is to profit from the mistakes of ourselves and others.”

~ Anonymous

I have two daughters, and they use the Internet daily for homework and to chat with friends. My husband and I have reviewed the online dangers and scenarios that may arise. My oldest daughter is 15 and has been singing in public since she was 11; she completed her first CD at 13. She has had her own Web site since then.

In 2004, she appeared on a nationally televised show and started to receive a lot of fan mail on her Web site, including one from a guy calling himself “Brian.” She wrote back to say thanks. He asked if they could stay in touch. After about three weeks, my daughter said, “Mom, I have been writing this guy named Brian, and he says he wants to send me a gift.” It made her uncomfortable, and I didn’t like what I was reading!

He claims to be 21, a college student from Oklahoma, and a fan of my daughter’s. On her Web site, she has a list of “Favorites.” Her movies include “Passion of the Christ” and “The Notebook.” Deducing that she was spiritual, he signed off as “Brian” and “Brother Brian,” often including “Yours in Christ.”

I read other e-mails he had written—luckily my daughter had saved them. At first he said he was like her big brother. However, as the weeks went by, the tone of his e-mails changed, and he began to profess his love. My daughter is 15!

Below is an excerpt from one e-mail. Keep in mind when you read this that my daughter never said she was lonely. Often he would try to endear himself to her by attempting to convince her she said things she did not:

“Just like you have classes to get your high school diploma and just like you go to classes to further your singing and dancing, I would like to help you train your spirit and mind through prayer and



spiritual visualization to ‘see’ your future husband in your mind and spirit so that you will not feel lonely. I have special training in therapy since I am working on four majors in college on two degrees at the same time and my majors are in psychology, sociology, economics, and finance. Remember I told you I would do anything for you, so please let me help you.

The therapy I am suggesting can be done through chat, and if you can devote an hour a week, it will greatly help you. I was thinking of Tuesdays. Let me know whether Tuesdays are OK with you.

Brother Brian”

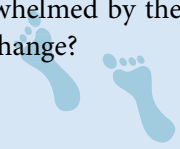
At some point my daughter mentioned to “Brian” that her producer (she’s part of a girl group in Hollywood) has them running on the days they’re rehearsing.

continued on page 2

NAC Tracks

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the pace of technological change?

Vote here



My Daughter and the Stalker *continued from page 1*

“Brian” believes running is bad for bones and wanted to send an exercise bike. She told him not to and said she would not give him her address. He said that he *already* sent it! “Brian” looked at the guestbook on my daughter’s Web site and wrote one of the girls. She was 13 and felt “Brian” was, as she said, “a nice guy who just wanted to send a gift.” So she gave him our address. She is a friend, so we had a long talk with her about safety.

Now “Brian” knows where my daughter lives, but all we know about him is his e-mail address. We don’t know if “Brian” is his real name. He would also write about meeting her in heaven one day, and that was very frightening to me. I knew I had to find out who he really was, so I went searching for answers. It is frustrating trying to get information. It’s as if these creeps have more rights than we do!

I spoke with a good friend who suggested I call i-SAFE. They gave me some direction and told me how to further protect my daughter by not listing “upcoming appearances” on her Web site (predators would know exactly where she was and when). We also changed her guestbook to reveal the IP address of entries. She even changed her “MySpace” profile to “Private” so only friends can visit.

We did these things immediately and called the local police. The officer was very nice and understanding but said what I suspected all along—“Brian” has been very careful about what he says and has not yet asked to meet my daughter, so no crime has been committed.

Small gifts continued to arrive. He even sent me flowers so I would allow him to correspond with my daughter. I called the FBI and asked what to do because my daughter was feeling stalked. We got the same response: The FBI said its hands were tied. It is so frustrating to feel scared, to have my child feel stalked, and to be told by the authorities that no crime has been committed. The FBI agent spent some time with me on the phone and directed me to write a “Cease and Desist” letter to “Brian” and tell him that if he violated the order, we would seek legal action against him.

I e-mailed the letter to “Brian.” I sent a hard copy to his P.O.

Box and kept a copy of the letter, as well as the e-mail, for our files. “Brian” wrote back saying that he just wanted to keep in touch because he believed Christians should stick together and that he is a fan of our daughter. He went on to say that the gifts were just gifts to be enjoyed from one Christian to another. He said he was raised to respect his elders (made me feel so old!), and he would abide by our wishes. We did not respond.

He didn’t stop contacting our daughter, though. She stopped returning his e-mails, so he began instant messaging her. She would block his screen name, and he would open a new one. Finally, she created a new screen name for herself. He was relentless, but it seems like he has finally given up. It’s been three months since she has heard from “Brian.”

Kids are kids: They know there are dangers out there but still make errors in judgments. Many think it won’t happen to them, but sadly, statistics show otherwise. It is so important for parents to keep the lines of communication open with their children. I have always been thankful that I have a close relationship with my children. We are still “on guard” and probably always will be, but we’re a bit wiser about what the law can and cannot do in situations like this. As parents or guardians, we need to stay proactive and protective in this age of computers. We have to remind our kids that the Internet can bring unwanted people right into your home. It makes me miss the lost art of letter writing.

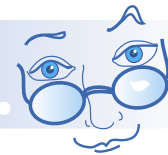
Beverly, California

In Your Neighborhood

Everyday there are many i-SAFE events going on across the country. We’ve made it easy for you to get involved and help spread the message of Internet safety to your peers and your community. Simply check out our “Calendar of Events” at http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub_id=3 to find an event near you.



Ask an Expert—*Conducting an i-PARENT Program*



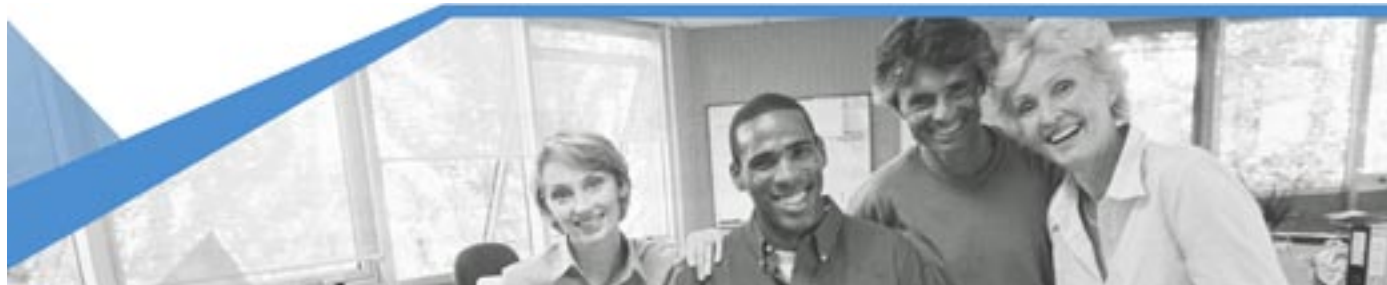
Q *I've never given a presentation. How can I do the i-PARENT Program?*

A Giving an i-PARENT presentation is really easy! The topical videos contained on the i-PARENT Toolkit offer in-depth education on Internet safety topics of particular interest to families. The video format makes it easy for anyone to conduct an i-PARENT Program regardless of experience or prior Internet safety knowledge.

Here is a step-by-step guide to conducting an i-PARENT Program.

- 1) Define and secure a time and location for the i-PARENT Program.
- 2) Submit an implementation plan for your event at least three weeks prior to event date.
 - a. Log on to the i-SAFE Web site at www.isafe.org with your user name and password.
 - b. From your personal page, click on "Submit Implementation Plan."
 - c. Select "i-PARENT Program."
 - d. Complete the remaining fields to inform us of the details of your event. An i-PARENT CD will be mailed to you, and materials will be available for downloading on your personal page.
- 3) Secure a guest speaker, such as a school official, police officer, pastor, etc.
- 4) Circulate invitations and hang posters (contained in the "Forms and Downloads" section of the CD).
- 5) Prepare handouts and sign-in sheets (also in the "Forms and Downloads" section of the CD).
- 6) The day before the event, follow up with the guest speaker, ensure that equipment is functioning, and assess a location.
- 7) Conduct the i-PARENT Program.
 - Introduce agenda and guest speaker.
 - Guest Speaker
 - Show the "Start Here" video if you are conducting an i-PARENT training to train parents to conduct i-PARENT Programs.
 - Show the topical videos. Between each video, hold a discussion on the topic just covered.
 - Final questions and answers
 - Encourage participants to sign up for an i-PARENT Board.
 - Distribute tip sheets.
- 8) Send sign-in sheets to i-SAFE.

It's that easy! If you have questions, please contact us at parents@isafe.org.



Did You Know?

Subtitling for the Hearing Impaired


Recently, Apple has been taking heat for providing the new iPod video without providing closed-captioning on its content for the hearing impaired. i-SAFE webcasts and videos used to educate high-school students, are now subtitled for the hearing impaired.

i-SAFE realizes that the Internet is an extremely valuable communication tool for people who are hard of hearing. Whether it is e-mail or instant messaging, everyone is on the same playing field no matter how well they hear. i-SAFE's work with students and educators reveals that the hard of hearing are online even more than other students. And this group needs to learn Internet safety now more than ever. That is why i-SAFE is making the webcast DVD available with subtitling—effective immediately.


To get your copy of the i-SAFE subtitled webcasts, send an e-mail request to education@isafe.org. In the future, all i-SAFE webcast DVDs will be subtitled and will not need to be special ordered. 



CEO Testifies to House of Representatives

In April, i-SAFE Inc. CEO and Program Director Teri Schroeder testified before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations at a hearing entitled “Sexual Exploitation of Children Over the Internet: What Parents, Kids, and Congress Need to Know about Child Predators.” She addressed the changes in our lives as the nation's youth explore the wonders of the Internet and the importance of education and youth empowerment. She pointed out parents' roles and youth perceptions and behaviors regarding the Internet while stressing the need to empower those youth with the appropriate tools to reduce the risk of online predators. Click here to read Ms. Schroeder's full testimony. 

Next Month is Internet Safety Month

June is National Internet Safety Month, a full month dedicated to keeping kids safe online. Start now by working with your local PTA to get involved and organize Cyber Safety Weeks at local schools, and encourage parents to hold i-PARENT Programs to create awareness about the dangers of Cyberspace. Host assemblies on Internet safety, and pass out flyers detailing how to take action. Or encourage community members to get involved through i-SAFE's i-Adopt-A-School program, which would ensure that our unique, world-class Internet safety curriculum, as well as our youth-empowerment and community-outreach programs, would be taught in every classroom in the United States. Let i-SAFE be your guide by visiting www.isafe.org for ideas and info. Don't be left out. Step up and take action! 

This month's "Site Spotlight" is i-SAFE partner www.staysafe.org. Resources include:

- for kids – games, online community, activities
- for teens – true stories from peers, games, and more
- for parents – information and articles to get up to date and educated
- for teachers – advice on professional development, education articles, news, how students can make a difference, and more




Tech Tip—Browser Toolbars

Q On quite a few of the Web sites I visit, I am asked if I want to add a “toolbar” to my web browser. Most of the time I say no because I’m unsure what the “toolbars” are for. Most seem to be Internet search helpers, like the Google bar or Yahoo bar. Can you shed some light on whether toolbars are useful?

A Browser toolbars are helper objects designed to enhance your Web surfing experience. The vast majority of toolbars are developed by Web search-engine companies that want to provide you with a quick way to do search without having to navigate to their home page. Companies like Google, MSN, Yahoo, and Alexa all make good Web search toolbars. Most contain added features that allow you to block pop-up pages, provide feedback on pages you visit, or view information about the Web site operators that can help you determine whether a site is legitimate.

In addition to simple Web searching toolbars, there are others that provide more specialized services. eBay has a toolbar that allows you to see all items up for auction based on the search terms you enter. Merriam-Webster makes a toolbar that puts a dictionary and thesaurus at your fingertips. Wikipedia makes a toolbar for the Firefox browser that makes creating and editing Wiki entries a breeze. Finally, if you don’t find a toolbar that does everything you want, there are tools available that allow you to create your own toolbars with just the features you want. Toolbar Designer for Windows is an example of one of these applications.

Not all toolbars are created equal. You should read the “End User Licenses Agreement” for any software you download to see if any of the information you provide to the software company may be used or sold to others. Beware: There are some toolbars that can act as spyware, reporting back to the software company. Another downside is that toolbars eat up space from your browser window. If you installed all the toolbars mentioned in this tip, you probably wouldn’t have enough window space left to view this page. If you do wish to use web browser toolbars, I suggest you stick with one or two that you find useful. 

In Action—If We Don’t Watch Out for Him, Who Will?

Last year my son was bullied online by his best friends. It was a horrible experience. I was horrified at the content contained on these social-networking sites. I joined i-SAFE because it has the answers parents need.

Armed with two months of research into the online teen phenomenon, I went to the Lake Washington School

District. Within weeks, it announced the incorporation of the i-SAFE K through 12 curriculum into every school in the district. It is awesome. I became an i-SAFE trainer and now educate parents with i-SAFE’s i-PARENT Program. I have also been invited to join the FBI Citizens’ Academy.

We check our son’s web pages every couple of weeks and occasionally find inappropriate comments. But he and his friends are finally getting the message. He does believe, though, that I am intruding into his private space. 795 million Internet users around the world can view his page—but not his parents! Recently he changed his group page to “Private,” but these are a major attraction to sexual predators. So our family rule is: “No Private Rooms.” He will have to live with this. It’s called tough love. Just as we discuss with him peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, and all the other horrible experiences our teens are going through, dangerous and inappropriate Internet use is added to the list.

If he acts inappropriately on the Internet, someone out there is going to find a way to hurt him now or use it against him in the future, and he won’t even realize it. If we don’t watch out for him, who will?

It’s that simple.

*Stephanie Dickson, i-PARENT
Seattle, Washington*



Internet Safety Tip for Parents



Talk about online dangers.

Let kids know you are there to help.

All too often, kids and teens have a false sense of security at home in front of a computer. Here are a couple examples of what we mean.

1. A 12-year-old flirts in chat rooms, asks for personal information, asks for a meeting, doesn't show up, and thinks it's funny.
2. A 13-year-old agrees to meet her new online "friend" in person.

Both are true stories. The first story is about someone we recently met. She did this because "nobody will ever know it's me." We explained to her how people with the proper computer knowledge will be able to find her and that if you toy with people's emotions, they may become angry enough to look for you. She has since stopped.

The second story is about someone we did not talk to in time. Her name was Christina Long. She was sexually assaulted, killed, and dumped in a ditch by Saul Dos Reis. He has since been convicted and is serving time in prison.

Don't think it won't happen to your kids, and don't believe for a second your kids are too young. Christina was a sixth-grader. Let your children know there are dangers online, and let them know to come to you immediately when they are in trouble. And while you're at it, let your family know, your friends know, your neighbors know, and your PTA know. E-mail us at parents@isafe.org, and we will send you all the material you need to spread the message. It's quick, it's easy, and it's free.

Team Up with i-SAFE

Currently, i-SAFE has reached more than one million students with Internet safety information. By providing free materials, programs, and educational videos, students are learning how to make positive choices when challenged with today's technology. Not only are students learning to protect themselves against predators, they are also learning how to make decisions regarding intellectual property, identity theft, and more.

i-SAFE strives to provide your family with the most current information regarding the issues youth face today on the Internet. In order to bring our programs and materials to your community and your home, we rely upon donations.

We would be grateful if you, or perhaps someone you know, could assist i-SAFE in educating as many children as possible. Since i-SAFE is a 501(c)(3) corporation, your donations are fully tax deductible.

To donate, e-mail donations@isafe.org or go to http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=gi&sub_id=2.

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. The goal is to educate students on how to avoid dangerous, inappropriate, or unlawful online behavior. i-SAFE accomplishes this through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. It is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org

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We Value Your Input

Do you have a question or a comment about an article? Perhaps you have a story you wish to share with other readers. Do you know somebody whose story will inspire others to get involved? Whatever the case, we would like to know. Please e-mail us at editor@isafe.org with questions, comments, or contributions. If snail mail is your preference, **send written correspondence to:**

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Suite 100
Carlsbad, CA 92008

i-SAFE has moved! Be sure to make a note of our change in address for future correspondence.
And remember:
Stay safe in Cyberspace!