I am
Stong, Smart, and Safe Youngter...
OVER THE INTERNET
We believe

* We believe in peace ... Peace for the whole world. We believe that peace must come from within, from deep inside us ... from the depths of our hearts.

* We believe that God intended happiness and safety for children.

* We believe that child abuse, in any form, in any place and from any person, is wrong and should be immediately stopped.

* We believe that no child deserves to be abused.

* We believe that child abuse can never be the fault of a child.

* We believe that children can have power over adults, they are however; in need to learn how to utilize their power.
I am a Strong, Smart and Safe youngster On the Internet

Is this booklet for me?

If you are a student in middle school or high school, this booklet is for you. In the coming pages we will refer to both male and female youth within this age frame as “Youth” or “Young People”.

I cannot live my life without internet; I hope this is not what you want to say?!

The internet became a reality of our time and there is no way around it. It opened new horizons for us and introduced many attractive dimensions that we did not know about; in particular for young people. It nurtured their curiosity, their passion to
be connected, network and be entertained. It is now part of their daily life and is frequently being used for entertainment, networking and even preparation of school work.

I spend good times on the internet, I do not see any problem in that, why are there concerns present?

The internet; like any other tool has positive and negative sides. A main distinction is the fact that it is an open gate to the whole wide world and it is impossible to be certain of the identity of the person/people on the other end of a chat session or any other form of communication. The people present in the virtual world are a reflection of the people present in the real world, there are good people who look for good things and there are people who hold bad intentions and there are others who exploit youth in immoral ways.
Youth are repeatedly entrapped over the internet as stated in the following points. You must use your intelligence to avoid falling into any trap. Remember, all the youth who have been involved or victimized by any of the following where under the impression that they were safe and thus did not take the necessary precautions to be protected in the actual sense.

- Involvement in pornography or sexual exploitation.
- Exposure to abuse or emotional extortion.
- Falling a victim to or being involved with bullies.
- Involvement in dealership or promotion of illegal materials, such as drugs or pornographic films.
- Falling a victim to financial extortion or being forced to engage in violent or unethical conduct.
- Being involved with terrorist groups or other groups of dire intent.
• Exposure to physical or sexual abuse. There has been a reported case of a murder of a young person and a family member of his by a stranger whom he met over the internet.

• Falling a victim to human trafficking networks.

**Aren’t the above statements exaggerated? Can a simple access of the internet pose me to all those risks?**

Accessing the internet opens doors to almost anything. Initial steps towards complications, risky involvement or harm begin with relationships that appear to be simple, casual, innocent and at times beautiful. The other party may position himself as a gracious respectful person, however; the relationship can gradually transform to a source of inconvenience and perhaps take more dangerous turns. Relationships rarely take abrupt turns. Patience, solicitation and steady building of trust are essential parts of the process of luring youth into harm’s way. Initial requests are usually respectful and barely exceed a picture for
familiarization; afterwards, the person may request another picture involving an added component that may appear to be strange, and so on until the young person finds himself in a difficult path with no easy way back.

The first thing you should keep in mind is that everything has to be processed using your intelligence. Social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and other sites are open doors for you to communicate with different people from around the world, you do not know anything about most of them, all the information you have comes from how they represent themselves on the internet. As some people can be honest, others can be deceptive, and you are left with no way to learn the truth.

I have a membership in a social networking website like Facebook. I regularly post statements and pictures, is there anything I have to be cautious of?
A fifty years old man may claim the identity of a sixteen years old adolescent and a thirty years old woman may assume the identity of nine years old child. Further, a paedophile may claim that he is a teenager in need of help, while a women involved in human trafficking may claim that she is a policewomen trying to provide assistance! We can never know and can never be certain.

Remember that you own all your words and pictures provided you do not post them online or send them using an internet medium. Once you do so, you will lose all control over them; regardless of whom you send them to.

The following points will help you maintain control over your own statements and pictures:

- Do not post or send pictures of personal nature or ones that may cause you embarrassment if misused or leaked. Do not send such pictures to people that say will take good care of them as they will too; lose all control over them once they are on the internet.
• Reflect your sophistication on the internet; do not use indecent words or make violent or immoral insinuations, such conduct compromises your sense of self respect and appreciation. Further; it exposes you to abuse and harm on the internet.

• Consider your page on networking websites like Facebook a private space; just like your bedroom. Verify the identity of people walking in and out of it and do not take any chances. Do not allow individuals you never met in real life to enter your page as you can never know the true identity behind the ID.

• You may receive numerous requests to join pages or websites, use your intelligence, be cautious and particular and do not accept invitations from people you have never encountered in real life.
The invitations you receive on your instant messaging service may far exceed the ones you receive on social networking websites. However, it is important to know that there are people who devote time and energy to hurt and extort others using this service. A factor that makes the instant messaging service an aperture is its feature that allows users to access their emails directly. There are people present who may ask to be added to your list as friends using false names, whom may then attempt to seize your password and put you in a very compromised and vulnerable position. Some may email immoral or false content to everybody on your contact list, others may attempt to denounce your character, or even impersonate you and initiate inappropriate conversations with your friends and contacts.

I love talking to my friends via Instant Messaging Services. At times we discuss topics related to our school exams. Are there points that I should keep in mind?
Make a point of using your intelligence at all times when surfing the internet, especially when communicating with other people. Also, make sure that you do not give away your password to anybody except your parents.

**I know that many bad things take place in chat rooms, why?**

Chat rooms can be one of the most dangerous locations on the internet because the domain is too large for anyone to attempt to lure you (there are many people who will attempt to do so).

Participation in chat rooms is open to anybody, and many people are able to know you through your words, they can analyze your weaknesses and your strengths and use them against you. At times the process is so smoothly conducted that you will not even feel their presence.
Use your intelligence in chat rooms and note the following:

- Do not choose names (IDs) containing immoral or violent implications.
- Do not engage in conversations regarding immoral or compromising topics, as abusers target such people and subject them to exploitation and extortion.
- Do not participate in conversations regarding topics you know would inflict shame on you should others know about it.
- Do not give any information about yourself such as your name, your age, the location of your residence, the name of the school you attend, your phone number, the phone number of any family member and do not send any pictures to anyone in such rooms. Do not give any information about your family or social status. Do not give information regarding your current condition, such as saying "I'm alone in the house now."
• Do not talk about any family problems that you are facing with strangers in chat rooms. As you do not know who is on the other end of the conversation, and this person might use the information donated to analyze you, better know you and possibly blackmail you using such information.

• One might speak charming statements to you such as “you are special person”, “I am fond of you”, or “I am in love with you”. Such words have been known to be a regular trap for youth over the internet.

• Do not set appointments with people you met over the internet, as this is an extremely dangerous conduct.

• Statistics indicate that many crimes against youth were committed by individuals they met in the cyberspace.
Bullying means that some youth use bad words in a sharp tone against others. At times they would take advantage of their physical strength or their connections to humiliate their colleagues, hurt or blackmail them, some would go to the extent of forcing other people to do things they do not want to do. Those young people are trying to demonstrate their power and strength by hurting others.

Always remember that bullies are amongst the weakest and the most vulnerable of people, and all they are trying to do is to hide this weakness and vulnerability with false masks. They recognise limitations within themselves, but rather then compensating them by acquiring new skills , trying to advance themselves or attempting to understand and develop humanitarians aspects within them in order to gain respect, they focus on degrading others as this gives them a forged and momentarily sense
of victory which will eventually diminish their value before themselves and others.

Be brave and strong and say NO to bullies. Do not bully anyone, and do not help anyone bully others, or bully you. Bullies feed on the fear and silence of their victims. Bullying takes place on the internet in the following ways:

- Sending e-mails containing character denouncing materials.

- Circulating inappropriate pictures of you along with negative statements. Note that such pictures were mostly sent to trusted people. Do not send/post private pictures or ones that will embarrass you if exposed. Always ask your self, will this picture embarrass me if it was leaked to the media? Click send only if you are sure that it can never hurt you.

- Creating chat rooms, social networking pages or blogs dedicated to circulating negative statements about you.
• Distribution of text messages through Twitter or any other website containing negative statements about you, with the purpose of hurting and embarrassing you.

Remember that hurting people is not manliness. Courage is chivalry, showing respect and helping others. Be brave and create an atmosphere of courage among your friends.
There are lots of entertaining games online. Ones that can develop important skills in you and teach you new things, others however; contain negative dimensions, including violence and immoral practices. They might appear as simple games, but they contribute in instilling fatly concepts in youth, stimulate anxiety, tension and other negative feelings that will ultimately deny them the vitality of life as a young people.

Do not spend long hours on any one game, especially one that encourages violence or immoral conduct as it will harm you in the short and long term.

I enjoy online games. At times; I do not want to leave the computer, do these games have negative impacts on me
Yes, a young person’s personality plays a significant role in his vulnerability to abuse whether online or in real life.

Here are some examples of most vulnerable young people on the internet:

- Young people who are looking to experience emotions on the internet are more vulnerable than others. Emotions are an essential component of everyone’s live, especially of young people’s, including many who come from families which lack the appropriate skills to demonstrate their love and passion towards their children despite the enormous love they hold for them. On the other hand, many of today’s movies and soap operas focus on pre-marriage romantic relationships at considerably early ages, some young people look to experience such relationships through the internet, where there is no accountability.
These relationships, however, are not true, and what we fear for others to know or are shy of is what we feel is wrong deep in our hearts.

Remember that there is no way to know the truth behind other peoples allegations regarding their names, their age, their identity or even if they were males or females at the first place. There are many individuals and networks specialized in pursuing young people who surf the internet looking for false and momentary emotions and use sweet words to attract and entrap them.

- Young people looking for adventures and looking to compensate some shortages that they feel in their lives through the internet. As some see it as an open ground in which they are free to do anything they wish for without taking into account moral aspects or the rights of others.

- Vulnerable youth who are easily dragged into any enticing statements, advertisement or propaganda. In addition to ones who are easily engaged in random activities that look tempting, as well as those who
participate in forums and websites that promises them access to opportunities they are seeking.

- Young people who lack self-esteem, and do not associate any value to themselves, their value is drawn from statements made by others. They become attracted to people who feed their self-esteem through speaking validating statements. Interruption or alteration in such statements or treatment can entice feelings of distress and depression.

- Easily stimulated youth, who are not accustomed to critical analysis or providing themselves with room to think before taking action or responding to provocation.

- Young people who view their distinctiveness in the denigration of others, they are weak in the inside, and inside them lay many loopholes that can be easily detected, penetrated and exploited.
Youth, who do not keep a present mind of the purpose behind their presence on the internet, they become easily distracted with alluring links or advertisements while surfing the internet and start browsing pages they were not intending to.

What if I find myself in trouble and all my options are difficult?

There is always an option. When we are consumed with fear or worry, things seem bigger and more complex. You have multiple choices which are not necessarily easy, but with steadiness and through consultation with an adult you know and trust and who is able to help you like a parent or teacher you can do a lot. Do not keep what is happening to your self or share it with your friends, as they might not be able to help you.

You can remove yourself from a bad situation, you only need to take one courageous step and decide to stop what you are doing. Make your values and morals present at all times to help you stop and find a way out. This may not be easy but it is a very smart and
courageous step to stop the abuse, and make sure that you will not indulge in any thing that you refuse or that harms you either physically or emotionally.

Are there general rules that are good to remember?

These general rules will help you become stronger and more balanced in your daily life and on the internet:

- Real power lies in courage and not in the controlling or abusing others.

- Internal control is the most important component of a strong and balanced personality.

- Morality is the primary reference, against which you can measure what is good or bad for you.

- Everyone can add something beautiful to the world and you can too. Before taking any step, think to your self, "What will I add to the world by doing this?"

- You are worthy of all that is good in this life, because God has created you and he loves you dearly. Always remember that you are only worthy of fine conduct and speech.
I am a young person
Strong, Smart and Safe
Strong through my intelligence
Smart through my choices
And safe through my instinct
I help others
To make this world a more beautiful place.

If you want to talk to someone or have any question, write to us on the following address, be absolutely sure that we handle all emails with strict confidentiality
help@be-free.inf

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