Safety Corner
Topic: Internet Safety
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Learning Objective:

Students will learn the new rules for communicating safely in cyberspace.

The disparity in a message that travels from one person to the next, sets the stage for a whole group discussion on communication rules for the internet and how some people use the internet to bully. Safety advice on proper use of internet follows.

It might be hard to believe - but not that long ago - there was a time when there were no websites, laptops, tablets, or cell phones. In those days, people communicated face to face – or over the telephone, which was usually housed at your home or in centrally located public telephone booths.

People shopped for all their goods by going to the store and most transactions were by cash. You got cash from the bank by 3:00 p.m. or you had to wait until the next day when the bank would open at 9:00 a.m., and you could communicate with a bank teller what you needed. That sounds inconvenient now, but it didn't seem so to most people who experienced it at that time. People knew the rules for communicating and interacting safely and we practiced them regularly and easily.

How we communicate has changed over the years. Now much of our communication occurs over the airwaves – through the internet or cellular phones. It is important to remember when communication technology changed, the rules for communication changed, too. Unfortunately, we haven't all adapted our lives and practices to support safe communication for our advanced age of technology. This article discusses the new rules for communication and how to be safe you are online.

First Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

Do not let anyone or anything harm your computer. If you download something from a website that is not safe, you may get a computer virus. A virus may steal information from your computer, corrupt your files or render your computer un-usable. Only download files from reputable websites that your parents approve. Also, guard your email and social network information with safe passwords that only you could ever guess. Use a complex mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Then don't share your password with anyone – not even your best friend.

Second Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

Sometimes when you are surfing the web, a message pops up that may make you uncomfortable. Or you may even be directed to a website that was unintended and has messages, graphics, or film that makes you uncomfortable. If that happens to you – get out of there quick! Then tell your parents so they can block that website or do it yourself.
It may be a trap to lure you to content that is neither safe nor appropriate for you.

Third Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

Do not open emails from people or companies you do not know. If someone sends you an email claiming that you have won a free prize-delete it. It is likely a trick to confirm your email and send you endless advertisements or it may contain a virus to corrupt your computer. There is also no reason at all that a stranger should be contacting you by email or instant message. You wouldn't stop and speak with some random stranger on the street, would you? Don't do it online either! It's not safe. This includes all chat rooms. Only speak online to people you know.

Fourth Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

Certain information such as your name, address, phone number, or birthdate should not be shared online. People can get this information and use it to contact you when you do not want to be contacted or stalk you. The people who know you can talk to you about this information in person.

Fifth Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

Once a message or a picture goes into cyberspace, it could go anywhere and you have no control to where it travels. Someone might send it to your BFF or someone might send it to their parents. Messages can become distorted through cyber-translation so use your words wisely. Only post messages and pictures that you would be proud to show your parents. In this way, nothing comes back to you that might be embarrassing – even years later.

Sixth Cyber Safety Communication Rule:

One of the absolute worst things about communicating in cyberspace is the phenomenon of a new kind of crime – cyberbullying. This is when people post mean, harassing, or embarrassing things about people – usually without their knowledge. They send it to their friends, neighbors, relatives or post it on social media. Most of the time, they are lies or rumors meant to hurt another person. And sometimes it can be difficult to trace the origin of the messages. If you receive something about someone that you believe constitutes online bullying behavior, tell an adult, tell the person who is the target and assure them you do not agree with it. Do not forward the message to anyone else. This is not a victimless crime. Children have been very hurt due to this kind of behavior.

If you feel that you or someone you know has been the victim of Cyberbullying, you can contact the resources below:

- www.safealliance.org

- www.safe2Tell.org

- www.stopbullying.gov

- www.kidsagainstbullying.org

- http://www.cyberbullying.us/

- https://www.glsen.org/

- https://www.girlshealth.gov/bullying/

Sources:

http://www.netsmartz.org/internetsafety
http://fox21news.com/2015/07/02/cyberbully-law-goes-into-effectacross-colorado/
Colorado Revised Statutes §18-9-111
http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/bullying
http://cyberbullying.org/
http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/cyberbullying.html
https://www.gcflearnfree.org/internetsafety/
https://archives.fbi.gov
https://internetsafety101.org/
http://www.ncpc.org/topics/internet-safety