



A Parent's Guide to
Internet Safety



GEORGIA FAMILY COUNCIL



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Why Produce Guidelines To Internet Safety?

Not long ago it took a large building to house a computer with a fraction of the computing capacity of the average American home today. Our technological advancement has been staggering. The Internet holds vast quantities of helpful information; from the latest school project to updates on civic activities to help with the latest plumbing project, the web holds great potential. However, as with any tool, it can also be used in negative ways. The opportunity for involvement in pornography and violence through the Internet defies belief. Electronic communications can also be used to destroy our most significant relationships.

This guide is published as a resource for parents, educators, library personnel and community leaders who are concerned about the safety of children. The need for this information is evidenced by both the explosive growth in computer use and the targeting of children by predators. Recent research indicates that one in five children using the Internet regularly is approached for sex. Teenagers spend an average of 8.5 hours per week chatting and sending e-mail on the Internet compared with only 1.8 hours of computer use for school work. It's easier for cyber-porn to make its way into your home than it is to borrow a book from your neighbor. The anonymity of the Internet has also allowed pedophiles and stalkers to use electronic mail and "chat rooms" to lure their victims into dangerous liaisons.

There is almost no legislation regulating the Internet. However, more and more providers are providing parental control or screening options. There are also a growing number of software programs that can successfully block or filter out most unwanted sites. And, there are many steps we can take as adults to properly manage this medium.

But even technological help has its limits. Ultimately there is no replacement for parental involvement, communication and reliable community practices to protect our children.

It is our sincere hope that this guide will give you the tools you need to protect your family and successfully manage this resource.

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Introduction

A new era in communication

The Internet is revolutionizing the way we communicate information across the world and across town. Increasingly, the answer to almost any question starts with, “Let’s do an Internet search.” Although there is a tremendous amount of “junk” out there, there are many easy-to-find nuggets of good information or services that would otherwise be unavailable or at least very hard to obtain.

Families are recognizing the benefits and potential for the Internet, and are getting connected at an unprecedented rate. Most home computers purchased today are for the expressed purpose of “getting on the Internet.” Given the fact that the World Wide Web did not exist until 1994, we are witnessing the birth of a new era in communication.

Why family guidelines are so important

Immediate and private access to “information” is a double-edged sword. On the one

hand, unnecessary barriers have been removed. That is a good thing. On the other hand, traditional barriers of protection for children have crumbled as well, potentially exposing them to dangers that were unheard of ten years ago. For example, in former times children were protected from pornography by the location and doors of adult bookstores, along with laws that prevented children from entering such establishments.

Another danger is the abduction or abuse of children by “friends” they meet on the Internet, either by email or in chat rooms. Parents teach their children to be wary of strangers, but Internet friends appear to be like the harmless pen pals we grew up with. Of course, many of those friends are just that — same age/interest children who want to converse with our kids. However, some of them are adult predators masquerading as children. The anonymity of the Internet makes it very difficult or impossible to tell the difference.

As parents, we can no longer depend on the traditional barriers to protect our children. Family Internet guidelines are the first and last line of defense to prevent possible disasters.

The answers are not obvious

As a parent, there are several options you have to deal with these dangers. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to what measures will work best in your family; there are too many variables:

- Age and gender of the child
- Levels of parent and child computer knowledge
- Spectrum of compliant to rebellious personality in the child, along with level of curiosity
- How well parent-declared rules and consequences are followed through (in general)
- The child’s and parent’s understanding that pornography is a bad idea and should be avoided
- Ownership and location of the computer
- Amount of “home alone” time the child has
- Parental time and energy available to monitor Internet usage
- Nature of relationships between siblings
- All of these elements, as applied to the homes of the child’s friends

In the end, you will have to make the most informed decisions you can based on your family’s unique situation. This guide is intended to help with those decisions and policies.

Who should read this?

All parents should be interested in this subject, whether or not their children have Internet access at home.



Input

Understanding how to use the information flow

USING THE INTERNET

Finding the good stuff

The bulk of this booklet will deal with dangers of the Internet, but don't let that scare you away. The Internet provides quick and easy access to a wealth of good information. There are many starting points that will point your family in the right direction. Here are just a few.

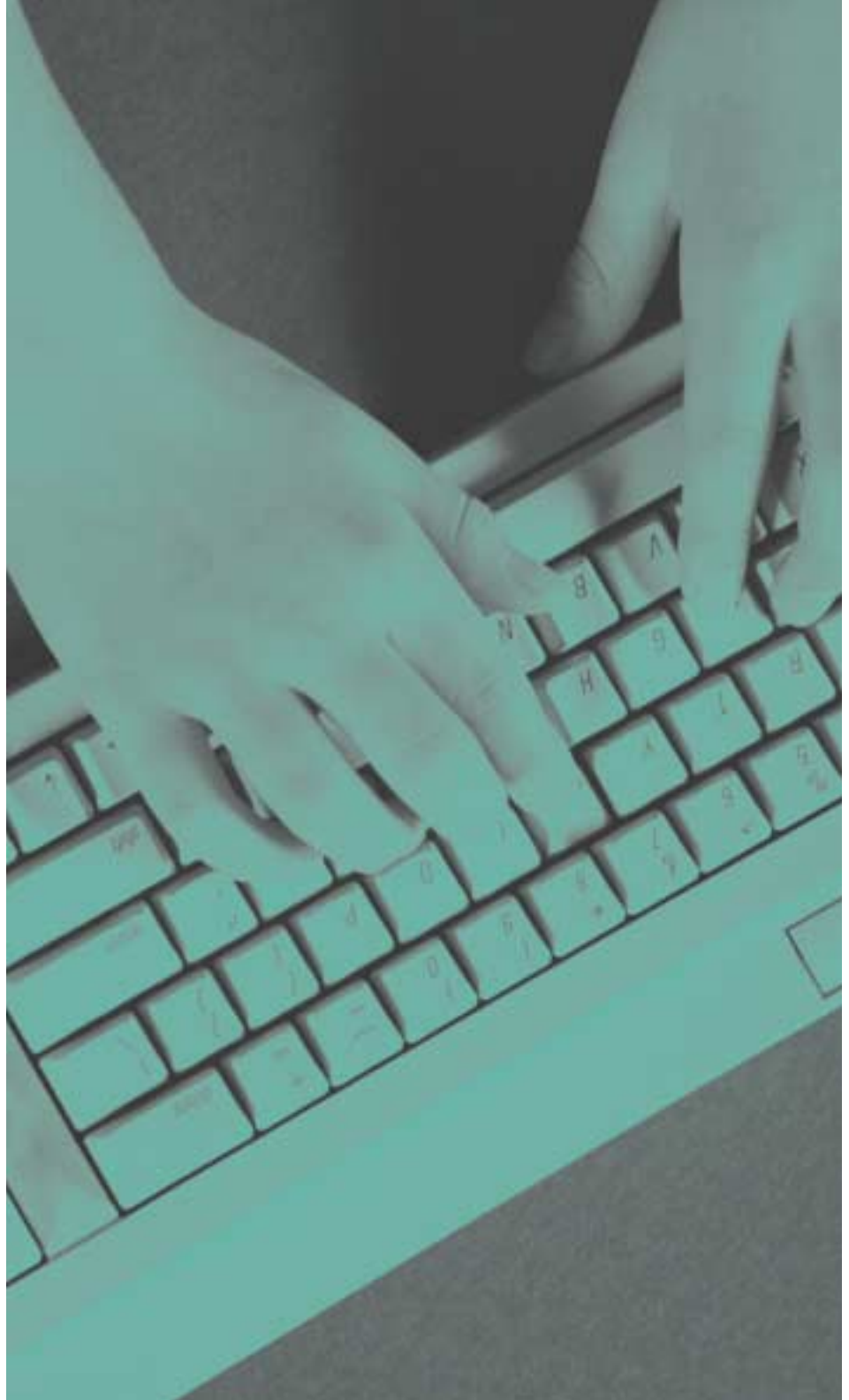
Everyone in the family can benefit from Yahoo, which is a set of human-chosen web sites on virtually any topic. Unfortunately, some of those topics visit the Dark Side, so it is important to have an Internet filter or monitor in place (see below) when using Yahoo or any other search facility. (www.yahoo.com)

Yahoo has created Yahoooligans which is specifically designed for kids. It allows searches on any topic, but filters out adult material: (www.yahoooligans.com)

There are several general web search facilities available; all of them can potentially drop the user into the middle of adult sites. (In fact, pornographers take advantage of that by coding their pages to come up for innocent searches.) Even if an Internet filter prevents your child from actually going to an inappropriate web site, you may not want your children to see the language in the site's short summary which gets shown with search results. For this reason, some search engines let you configure searches to perform lightweight filtering. For example: www.lycos.com ("SearchGuard") www.google.com ("Safesearch")

Danger on the Dark Side

The Internet's Dark Side is very ugly. Unfortunately, most people seem to think Internet pornography is just a collection of Playboy-like naked women or "pin-up girls." This is not true. In addition to sex between two adults, every imaginable variant is displayed. This could involve violence, animals, waste products, and group arrangements.



Many parents believe that the “bad” hardcore pornography requires a credit card to obtain, and thus children are not likely to get there. Not true. While all porn sites do invite you to use a credit card to get deeper into that site, many of them have numerous free high-detail “sample” images.

Parents often have a rose-colored view of what their kids may or may not do. In one sense, that’s good — kids need to know that there is someone who will err in the direction of trust rather than mistrust. But don’t let that trust lull you into complacency. A teenager’s hormone-fueled curiosity is an extremely powerful force; you should not underestimate its power to draw your “good kid.” Many good parents never imagined that this could be a problem in their home — yet it was.

Is Playboy really on the Dark Side?

What about softcore porn? There are those who say that since God created the female body as a thing of beauty, there is no problem letting children see images from www.playboy.com and other similar softcore sites. In reality, any pornographic portrayal of women is degrading and dangerous. Pornography is invasive and progressive. By invasive, I mean that for a boy brimming with hormones, pornographic images take hold of his imagination and won’t let go. Pornography is progressive in that excitement turns to boredom after a while, and the viewer is drawn into harder and harder core material. Eventually, a boy gets bored with seeing “normal” things that a man and woman can do together, and excitement comes from seeing deviant sexual/violent behavior. It’s all “out there,” waiting for curious souls to click on readily available hyperlinks.

For more information on the destructive nature of pornography, see the Resource List section at the end of this guide.

The enemy works a 24-7 shift

The Internet’s Dark Side is not a passive danger. Pornographers have many tools in their arsenal to draw young teenagers into their world, intending to hook them for life. For example, porn proprietors hijack common misspellings of popular sites. They send out thousands of speculative “spam” email messages



containing inviting web hyperlinks. If your child clicks on one of those email message links, many browser windows are often spawned simultaneously, each one open to a different porn site. These windows often employ a concept called mouse trapping, meaning that if you try to close a window, it automatically re-opens to a different porn site. Also, if you respond to certain email messages with an “unsubscribe” directive, your email address can be sold on a premium “active” list, which may spark much more of the pornographic email spam. Porn

sites also sell advertising space to other porn sites, so one page can lead to another and another.

What makes home Internet access so dangerous (as compared to the public library, for example) is the combination of privacy and opportunity. All families leave older children home alone at times, and many kids will find the temptation to explore the Internet’s Dark Side irresistible.

DEALING WITH THE DANGERS

Prevention

Short of locking your kids in a closet throughout their childhoods, there is nothing you can do to completely protect them from pornography unless they cooperate with you. Pornography is so accessible today that given enough motivation kids can get it somewhere — at their friends' houses, at the public library, even from dumpsters. So, you need to help them be internally motivated to avoid pornography—not just because you say so (although that helps), but because they recognize how degrading and dangerous it can be.

Educate them about the negative nature of pornography. Help them conclude that, even given an opportunity, they want to avoid it. Then, the barriers you place between your kids and pornography will be seen as friendly reminders — like the fence alongside a cliff — helping them avoid giving in to temptation. Educated agreement is the best protection, because it is active wherever your child goes.

It may seem obvious, but also make sure your kids understand that accessing Internet pornography on the home computer will not be tolerated. Violation of that family policy should at the very least result in loss of Internet privileges for a time. If this consequence is posed in the right spirit, the child should consider it another friendly protection from what he or she already knows is wrong.

Of course, the parent's ultimate weapon against Internet abuse is totally pulling the plug on the Internet connection. As you will read next though, that action is not as simple as you might think.

Protection "without" an Internet connection

Many parents think that if they cancel their Internet Service Provider (ISP)—or never subscribe to one, they don't need to worry about Internet pornography in their home. This is not the case. Several ISPs offer extended "free no-credit-card" trial periods—plenty of time for your child to get deeply into the Dark Side of the Internet.

There is nothing to prevent your child from



signing up for one of these services. One nationwide ISP sign-up screen asks a self-identified child to call a parent over to press a "Consent" button; another says, "Click here if you are at least 18 years old." Granted, there is some percentage of super-honest children who will not press these buttons themselves. But the rest of the kids will just click and continue. Once the ISP is set up, it is very easy to hide the "start" icon somewhere that a parent would never look. The bottom line is that even if you don't think you have the Internet in your home, it could still be there.

Depending on the relationship you have with your kids, you may be able to deal with this possibility by merely watching for signs of Internet activity (see "Detection" below). If, in an extreme case you need to "pull the plug," you could remove or disable the modem. Of course, a child who works that hard to circumvent your protections will likely find another way to obtain pornography -- but at least you'll be able to have important conversations if you know about the attempts.

"Clean" Internet connections

The positive aspects of the Internet are strong enough that most families will want to provide some access to the Internet. One way to do this relatively safely is to use a "clean" ISP. This is an Internet provider that pre-filters the Internet before it reaches your home. There are

advantages and disadvantages of this protection method. On the plus side, you don't have to install filtering software and keep it updated. A negative is that you as the parent don't have control over what gets filtered and what does not — the ISP's notion of what is inappropriate may or may not match yours. With a filter, you can configure it to your family standards. (For example, what about skimpy swimsuits and lingerie? Will the ISP agree with your answer to that question? If not, there is little you can do about it.) However, for many families, a clean ISP can be the ideal solution. (See our resource list on page 15)

If your ISP is America Online (AOL), you can set filtering levels for each family member. (Keyword "Parental Controls")

Note however that a clever child can circumvent a clean ISP by simply signing up for their own trial-ISP account as described earlier, which can silently co-exist with your official family dial-up, cable, or DSL-based service provider.

Also, keep in mind that no filter is perfect — even one used by a clean ISP. Not all "bad" sites are blocked, so you should still perform Supervision and Detection as indicated below.

Protection for an unrestricted Internet connection

If your ISP doesn't pre-filter the Internet, and children have access to the machine, you absolutely must install filtering or monitoring

software — no exceptions.

It is not fair to put any kid in a “don’t look inside the box” situation, but that’s exactly what an unprotected Internet connection represents.

Which filter should you use? A complete review is beyond the scope of this guide. Much has been written about various filtering products. In general, you should choose one which blocks by using a subscribed-to list of known bad sites rather than by attempting to identify pornographic sites by words in the site addresses or on the web pages. You as the parent should also be able to configure the filter to block or unblock specific sites or web searches. One of the most popular filters in this category is CyberPatrol at www.cyberpatrol.com (or call 1-800-828-2608).

Even after you install an Internet filter, don’t become complacent. Many new porn sites are added daily. You should update your filter regularly — something that good filter software will remind you to do.

Note that filtering software will work even in the case of an alternate ISP described above.

Again, realize that no filter is perfect; you should still perform Supervision and Detection as indicated below. Without a filter, a child can find thousands of pornographic sites in seconds. With a filter, it can take an hour to find some of the few images that make it through the filter—but it can still be done.

Monitoring Software

Some products assist you by silently keeping a historical record of Internet activity that your child cannot clear. Monitoring software will work even in the case of an alternate ISP described above.

This is not a filter (although some monitors do provide limited filtering). Instead, a monitor lets you see where the computer has been. Of course, this method is only effective if you regularly review the history, and you hold your child accountable for where he goes on the Internet. However in some families, the un-clearable trail could be a better deterrent than any filter. A top-rated product in this category is Cyber Snoop, which can be downloaded from Pearl Software (1-800-732-7596): www.cyber-snoop.com

Note that if you install both filtering and monitoring software, they may conflict with each other since they both want to “own” the

Internet communication channel. However, monitoring products can co-exist peacefully with a clean ISP (see “Clean” Internet Connections above). The combination of a clean ISP and monitoring software on the computer is perhaps the most useful protection technique.

SUPERVISION

Some experts say that Internet access should be supervised by a parent (“always surf the web together with your child”) — a good idea that is made impractical by the fast pace in most of today’s families. However, there is something to be said for the concept of supervision. A child is far less likely to bring up questionable material if there is a chance of easy discovery. For this reason, I strongly urge caution regarding Internet connections in a child’s bedroom. It is much better for the computer to be in a prominent family-frequented location, preferably with the screen visible from the doorway and an outside window. Even if a bedroom computer is filtered and/or monitored, you should carefully weigh the risks of privacy against perceived benefits. You must assess whether or not your child is mature enough to handle a private connection.

Detection: Basics

Hopefully, you have established a relationship of mutual trust with your children. However, your job as a good parent requires you to ensure that your trust is justified. You need to know what your family computer is being used for.

An unfortunate situation has arisen in many of today’s families: the children know more about the computer than their parents do. While it is good for a child to be computer literate in today’s technology-saturated society, it also means that such a child can hide almost anything from a computer-illiterate parent.

The information in this Guide will help balance the scales somewhat — but there is really no substitute for parent computer education. You should use one of the many sources of Internet-oriented computer education: community colleges, public libraries, even computer stores. There are also self-study books written for the technically challenged (a.k.a. “dummies”). Your job as a good parent depends on your ability to monitor what is going on with

your home computer, and you can’t do that effectively in a knowledge vacuum.

In this Guide’s discussion of Detection, I will concentrate on the most common operating systems (Windows 95/98/ME/XP) and the most common web browsers (Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator; note that America Online’s browser is based on one of those two browsers, depending on the AOL version). The same principles apply to other operating systems and browsers, although the details may be different. Note also that there are non-browser ways of getting image files: FTP, Unencoded email, etc. I won’t discuss those methods here, but one way or another the results would be saved graphic image files, which are discussed below.

What should you do if you find something suspicious but not conclusive? I don’t recommend an immediate confrontation, especially if you are not very computer literate. There could be a legitimate reason for what you found. However, it should be a yellow flag for you to watch the situation more closely, and perhaps when appropriate ask strategic questions of your child.

Detection: Behavior Changes

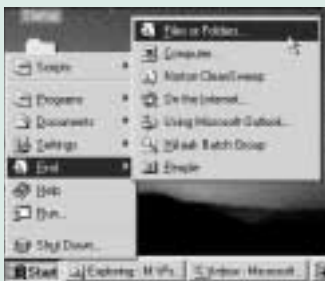
You know your child the best, and should be concerned if there is a noticeable change in behavior. Alfred O. Olsen, Chief of the Warwick Township (Lititz, Pennsylvania) Police Department, is a nationally recognized expert on Internet crime. Chief Olsen has collected some warning signs you should watch for, including:

- Loss of interest in social activities (withdrawal from friends, family)
- Uses of new (unusual) vocabulary, heavy with computer terms, satanic phrases, or sexual references — or sudden interest in related posters, music, etc. Look for related doodling or writing.
- Use of words such as: hacking, phreaking (or any words with “ph” replacing “f”)
- Lack of interest in self and appearance or indications of lack of sleep

DETECTION: SAVED GRAPHIC IMAGE FILES

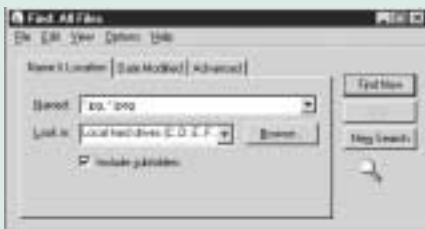
If your child has been viewing Internet pornography, there will very likely be downloaded images files somewhere. Depending on how much effort is being spent on hiding them, you may or may not be able to find them. In extreme cases, the child could even use free Internet file storage space that some vendors offer. However, you should look locally on the computer's hard disk; that's their most likely location, because they can be viewed without going online.

Checking out a sample of these files is not a guarantee that your child hasn't hidden something from you. However, these steps represent a good-faith effort to make sure that your trust in the child isn't misplaced.



Windows 95/98/ME:

The Windows operating system provides an easy way to look for files of certain types. From the Windows Start menu, choose "Find > Files or Folders."



This will bring up a dialog box that lets you specify what to look for and where to look for it. For "Named," type in the following. Do not put blanks on either side of the dots ("."); the space after the comma is optional. (*.jpg, *.jpeg, *.mht, *.mhtml) For "Look in," click on the down-arrow and choose "Local hard drives." (If that choice is not available on your operating system version, you will need to choose a specific hard drive like "C:." and repeat the operation if needed for other hard disk drive letters.) Also, make sure that the "Include subfolders" box is checked. Lastly, click on the "Find Now" button.



While the computer is looking, the magnifying glass under the "New Search" button will move in a circle. When it stops, you can look at the files that were found. There will likely be many files — perhaps even thousands. You can click on the "Size" column heading to sort the list according to how much disk space the files use. Click "Size" again,

and the list will be sorted to show the biggest files at the top. Most Internet photograph files are between 30 KB and 100 KB in size; double-click on their icons at the left to see them. Note that "mht" files are fully captured web pages with all of the pictures embedded inside, so they will be bigger than single pictures.

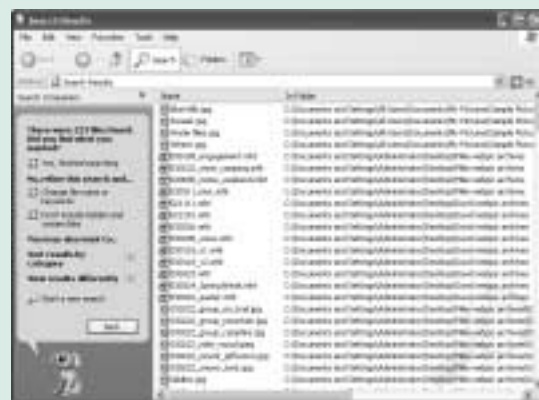


Windows XP:

Windows XP makes it easy to search for image files. From the Start button, choose Search. That brings up the following window:



Click on the "All files and folders" button, which results in this window:



For "All or part of the filename," type in the following. Do not put blanks on either side of the dots (" "); the space after the comma is optional: *.jpg, *.jpeg, *.mht, *.mhtml. Click the Search button. The computer will look

throughout your computer's disk drive and display the results as a list of files, as discussed for Windows 95/98/ME. If desired, you can click on the "view results differently" button, then click on "thumbnails" to see a pictorial representation of each file, as shown here.



DETECTION: BOOKMARKS/ FAVORITES

When an Internet surfer finds something useful, he or she will often bookmark that site, so it can be easily returned to later. Although it is possible to misname or hide bookmarks in obscure places, you should look at the ordinary saved bookmarks to see what is there.



Internet Explorer:

On the menu, choose Favorites and any interesting submenus



Netscape Navigator:

On the menu, choose Communicator > Bookmarks and any interesting submenus.



DETECTION: INTERNET BROWSING HISTORY

While an Internet browser is being used, it keeps a record of every place it has been on the web, for a user-specified number of days. You can access this record and see where your child has been or tried to go. Sometimes the web address will be obvious, e.g. www.hustler.com. If you are unsure, and you are online with your ISP, you can click (or double-click, in the case of Netscape) on the link from the history window, and go there yourself. If the history is blank or sparse, consider what that might mean. The user can clear the history at will, but why would your child want to do that?

Note that the history indicates attempted access, regardless of whether or not it was blocked by a filter.



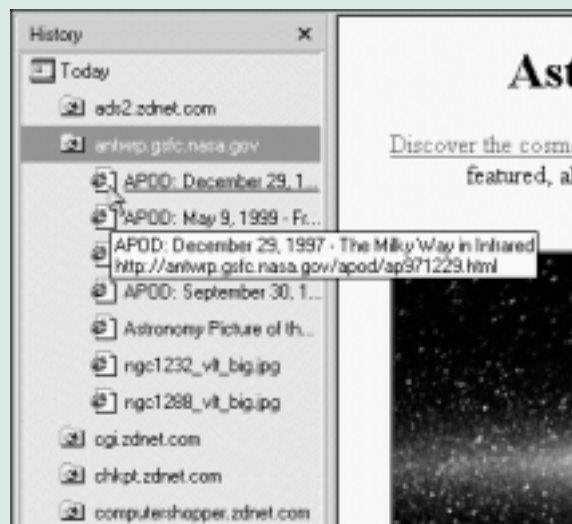
Netscape Navigator:

On the menu, choose Communicator > Tools > History.



Internet Explorer:

On the menu, choose View > Explorer Bar > History.



Away From home

Unbelievably, many public libraries allow children to view Internet pornography, in the name of “freedom of speech.” You should find out what your local Library’s Internet policy is, and what you might inadvertently authorize your child to access. Hint: if the policy doesn’t specifically prohibit the display of pornography or obscenity, and the machines are unfiltered, then your child is at risk. (Even if the child doesn’t access pornography, other patrons may do so in your child’s view.)

Another danger zone is at a friend’s house, where Internet guidelines may not be in place. If your child is so inclined, he could bring home a floppy disk or CD filled with pornographic images for later viewing or printing. If those files are copied to the computer’s hard disk, then the Detection procedures above may find them.

Last but not least, there is regular old fashioned printed pornography. The modern wrinkle on this theme is that kids can print their own copies of images using the photo-quality printers that many families own.

Conclusion

The most effective protection for your children starts with educating them about the destructiveness of pornography. Then, you need to help your kids stay honest by putting up a “fence along the cliff,” i.e. an Internet filter or monitor, and possibly using a clean ISP. To keep the kids from climbing over the “fence,” you need to diligently monitor their Internet usage and follow through if they abuse their Internet privileges.

Don’t be afraid of the Internet, but take charge of its presence in your home. Your family will surely benefit from your efforts.

Output

Understanding the dangers of on-line relationships

On-line Relationships

On-line relationships are not much different from traditional ones. The same happiness and hurt that happens as a part of school, work, or neighborhood relationships, happens in chat-rooms and electronic mail. Unfortunately, the deception that some individuals work through traditional relationships is even more effective on-line. Relationships created over a computer are easier to control, and those who exercise control with the purpose to harm, have found the Internet a virtual playground. However, for individuals who see relationships as opportunities to grow, laugh, share burdens, and communicate compassion, the Internet is an amazing technology that unites continents and cultures. Goethe's maxim, "a thing shared between friends holds twice the beauty," seems even more true at the keyboard, where each typed phrase can add a sense of community.

The On-line Family

We all know what it is like to miss someone. A spouse traveling for business, a child away at school, a sibling in another state. The Internet provides such a forum through shared letters, real-time chat, pictures and video. Today many families wake-up every morning to electronic messages full of humorous anecdotes, pictures of new family members, requests for prayer, and details about health, engagements, weddings, honors and awards.

Re-establishing Relationships:

Old friends. College roommates. Former teammates. Lost family members. Favorite teachers and ministers. Finding them is just a matter of searching for addresses or phone numbers at various on-line sites. A few laughs, a few tears later, and the years and miles melt away.

Time and Friendship:

The Internet provides the time to say what you really mean. It allows friends to chat, watch-



ing what the other is writing as they write it. It allows those who need more time to send email letters without worrying about having to rush their thoughts. The Internet provides opportunities for reflection before responding, for thinking through rather than walking out. It allows friends to respond immediately or to take time to say something carefully, compassionately.

Networking

Every employee knows the value of meeting professionals in other organizations. The Internet provides opportunities for sharing ideas about problem-solving, handling interpersonal conflicts, market trends, and other issues. The electronic transfer of information also increases the rate at which projects and other work assignments can be completed. Correspondence with employees in other states or countries is more effective on-line, and the expediency of the Internet increases an organization's productivity.

The Screen, the Mask, and the Danger of Anonymity

Because Internet communication isn't face to face, individuals can use the computer screen as a kind of mask. The lack of accountability and the relative anonymity create two distinct dangers.

First, the lack of accountability causes some individuals to stretch the truth, to make claims and statements that damage trust. Without trust, interpersonal relationships and entire organizations struggle under the burden of suspicion. The inability to communicate face to face can create a "they can't see me mentality" that emboldens vice and supplants virtue. Every day, men and women are led to believe lies, deceived by both their desire for new intimacies and the "unseen" individuals whose amorous advances are merely masquerades.

Second, because of the anonymity associated with the screen, spouses, employees, family, and friends can fall into the trap of believing that personal interaction isn't as necessary. The danger lies in the lack of risk — the missing vulnerability that engenders genuine ties, fosters familiarity, and hones the kind of honesty that makes relationships vigorous and vital. What the Beatles sang so long ago is true, "all the lonely people" are those, who wear "masks" that they "keep in the jar by the door." Although today's door is a



keyboard, and today's mask is a computer screen, the resulting loneliness created by falsehood and fabrication, is still the same.

Personal Information as a Snare

We've all read frightening newspaper accounts of a child being abducted by an online "friend" — someone who turned out to be an adult child molester masquerading as a same-age pen pal. It is imperative to teach your children to never share personal information like their full name, address, phone number, school name, etc. with someone they've never met. If the online friend wants to meet your child, you must arrange and supervise that meeting.

Stepping away from Harmful On-line Activity

If you are concerned that a friend or family member is being deceived by someone on the Internet or is viewing harmful material, approach them calmly, maybe over a cup of coffee or a soda, and mention your concern. Admit that you may be "jumping to conclusions," but ask them to be honest with you about the relationship.

Ask them if they can tell you what the dangers are for other individuals, and if any of those same dangers may pose potential problems for them. If they own up to the dangers and want

your help, you can offer to participate in accountability measures — installation of monitoring software or periodic review of their hard drive files, for example. In any case, you must maintain a good relationship or you could inadvertently drive them deeper into the online "friendship." Be careful with the suggestions you make and how you present them.

If the person is your spouse or child, you need to be more proactive. Where someone like that has demonstrated a problem with unhealthy online behaviors, the spouse or parent should insist on easy access to the computer and its contents. This will help provide accountability for any recovery efforts or newly-drawn boundaries. See the section on Supervision and the Resource List in the back of this booklet for further help.

Before you dismiss an on-line relationship as "harmless," remember that the lack of accountability, the ease of deception, and the anonymity the keyboard provides, make on-line relationships potential sources of instability.

The benefits and blessings of on-line relationships far outweigh the dangers for most individuals. The key is to outline the dangers for your family, to talk about them openly, and to create a kind of accountability that will foster healthy friendships.

Processing

Ideas on how helpful the Internet can be

The Internet can be an incredible tool, if used with care. Although teachers and other professionals are quick to warn about the absence of accountability for on-line sources (made-up facts, inaccurate dates, etc.), the Internet does provide almost immediate access to information. Like a huge, international encyclopedia index, Internet search capabilities allow you to focus your time and effort on specific words, phrases, events, and dates. Type in a few key words, and within minutes, the delights of discovery are yours.

Information updates

The Internet is a great source for immediate updates. Community, school, city, and state calendars, public agency meeting dates and notes, legislative issues, even fish stocking schedules can keep you up to speed with what's happening and when. You can keep current on airline ticket prices, vacation packages, changes in the stock markets, book deals, job openings, and, of course, the issues that surround organizations like the Georgia Family Council.

Data Source

In the past, most consumers did not have the time to access collections of local, state or federal statistics. It was even difficult to locate sources. Internet searches, however, allow anyone to access survey results about business and societal trends, what government and private research projects are underway, and what these agencies are finding out. The Internet contains on-line libraries and a variety of free, as well as, subscription-oriented databases, making your research an easier search.

Education

Parents who help their children with school projects have found the Internet a valuable source of information. Those ever familiar papers or reports about states, plants, animals, historical events, literature, science and geogra-

phy are easier now that local, state, and federal agencies have reliable and updated materials on-line. Although it is important to avoid personal web pages for this kind of information, the sites that are edited by organizations your family trusts can provide information tailored to your child's educational needs. (After all, many of the contributors to these pages have children doing the same kinds of papers and reports). The Internet also provides access to fully accredited programs for those seeking bachelor's, masters, and even doctoral degrees. Remember, be sure that the information is thoroughly documented (i.e. footnotes, endnotes, collateral articles, etc.).

Hobbies, Sports, Other

Every craft from quilting and gardening to model trains and fly-fishing is represented by local and

national organizations who have sites you can visit on the web. Updates (including video-replays) are available for most teams and sports. Professional associations sponsor countless sites that will help with gardening, remodeling projects, camping trips, coaching youth sports and finding accurate resources to make your project successful.

Finally, the Internet even provides sites that can help parents evaluate the music, movies, TV programs, books, games, and Internet sites their children hear about in their neighborhoods, churches and schools.

Certainly, like every area of society, the Internet has a "dark side," but learning how to avoid those sites can help you and your family find the true benefits of a technological "force" that is changing the speed at which we discover.



Breaking the Bank

The Internet and money compulsions



Everyone loves to get a great bargain—to pay a lot less for something than it’s worth or to sell something for more than it cost. But the hunt for the great bargain or easy dollars can become an obsession.

Millions of Americans already struggle with compulsive gambling habits or even compulsive shopping disorders where their preoccupations directly interfere with their relationships, mental health, and financial well-being. The convenience and hyper speed of the Internet seems to accelerate this problem in two ways: first by ratcheting up pre-existing compulsions and secondly by lowering barriers that had kept others from developing compulsions before.

Dr. Kimberly Young combines compulsive online auctioning, gambling and trading into a unique category of online addictions she labels “net compulsions.” She explains that in each of these areas, users are motivated by feelings of power and self-esteem (AddictionSolutions.com website)

Auctions

eBay, the world’s most popular virtual auction site, is a yard sale, flea market, and antique store rolled into one and then multiplied by a thousand. Today, eBay competes alongside of hundreds of other online auction sites.

The lure of bargains and sales opportunities that attract millions of users to online auction sites... including a small percentage who just can’t get enough.

Erik Hedegaard was one of those people. He was able to sell a typewriter for the absurd price of \$232.56. He was hooked. Eventually, Erik devoted more time and energy to online auctions than he did to his real job. It was starting to drive his wife and daughter crazy.

Conducting business in this way is not wrong. It could be a problem if some of the following statements could be said of you: Are you motivated to spend inordinate amounts of time at an auction site? Do you constantly check your email for updates on bids or obsess about buyer feedback comments? Do you find yourself browsing and bidding on auction items because you just enjoy your time on the auction site? When you recognize a problem, this is the time to begin to moderate your use of auction sites.

Day trading

People seem to like opportunities to make a lot of money off a minimal investment. The Internet not only helped to create much of the new wealth, it became the place people wanted to go to make their investments and manage their wealth. Being your own boss, however, can

have a downside.

That anxiety is the occupational hazard for a new kind of investor—the day trader. According to investing columnist Humberto Cruz, day trading is “the practice of buying and selling a stock in the same day—or quite often in a matter of hours if not minutes—to profit from the tiniest movement in the stock’s price.” Day traders often work independently, without managers and supervisors. Cruz is disappointed that so many voices in today’s financial culture place the emphasis on “trading” instead of “investing.”

Arnie Wexler is a recovering gambler who travels the country and wants to talk about all the people he had met with day trading problems. Like the 39 year old who retired from business and then got into online trading because of something he heard in a chat room. He started with \$475,000 and lost all but \$25,000 of it.

Or the friend who took out an equity loan for \$100,000 and started playing the stock market. He paid the loan for up to 6 months so that his wife wouldn’t get any notices in the mail. He started trading online at night and from his job. He finally had to confess when he blew all the money.

The chances of making a lot of money day trading just aren’t that good. The financial Services Authority emphasizes that only 11 percent of all day traders make money, while 70 percent of them lose big, often real big. Addicts of all stripes typically deny they have a problem but day traders can have greater denial because what they are doing is associated with a legitimate business.

Arthur Levitt, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission appeared before Senator Collin’s Senate committee. “I am concerned,” he said, “that some day traders don’t fully understand the risk they are assuming.” Levitt went on to stress the need for online brokerage services to fully disclose risks up front to customers.



Gambling

Twenty years ago, legalized gambling operated in only 2 states, Nevada and New Jersey.

Today it operates in some form in all but 2 states.

A recent federal commission on gambling estimated that 125 million American adults now gamble in one form or another. That's over half of our adult population. No wonder Americans spend more money on gambling than they do on movies, spectator sports, concerts, CDs, theme parks, video games, and even cruise ships combined. (Christiansen/Cummings Associates, Inc., *An Overview of Gambling in the United States* by Eugene Martin Christiansen)

The Internet now closes any remaining availability gap—conveniently delivering gambling to everyone. Arnie Wexler struggled with old-fashioned casinos. “Now, we’ve allowed the Internet to put casinos in offices, college dorms, and homes,” he says. “Anyone can play anywhere, at anytime.” One lady wrote Arnie to describe the mess she was able to get into from home. “I got hooked in by an innocent email message which contained a hypertext link to an online casino,” she said. “After three days, hardly any sleep, and my credit card right next to my computer, I had lost \$6,000.”

Internet casinos handled \$2.2 billion in 2000 according to Christiansen Capital Advisors. Four million Americans are currently gambling online, according to Cyber Dialogue (Grok, 152). While some casinos make an effort to watch for compulsive gamblers and try to keep them from getting out of control, the Internet doesn't have that level of accountability. “A compulsive user can rack up thousands of dollars in debt without anyone knowing,” explains Dr. Valerie Lorenz, Executive Director of the Compulsive Gambling Center in Baltimore. “There's no one around who can regulate the gambler or put a stop to it.”

In fact, the user may not even be an adult.

“Because no one stands at the door to the virtual casino checking IDs, our children have the means to gamble on the computer after school,” explains Jeff Houck. (Jeff Houck, “Logging in to a Cyber Abyss,” January 26, 1999, the Palm Beach Post, Sport 1C)

Not surprisingly, online gambling is exploding on college campuses. College students have free time and free Internet access and often have multiple credit cards—making them a perfect market for online gambling. “Internet gambling is as dangerous as alcohol on campuses,” says Andy Lissak, “Colleges just don't realize how bad it is.” Andy saw an ad for an Internet gambling service in his West Virginia University school paper. He started going online to place sports bets as often as three times a day. He lost his girlfriend and racked up \$7,000 in credit card debt.

A lady called Arnie Wexler last year. She told him that her son was in the early years of college. He had never gambled before, but he started betting online. In a short time, he lost over \$30,000 from a checking account and a credit card. “It is easier for a kid on a college campus to place a bet than it is to buy a can of beer or a pack of cigarettes,” says Wexler.

The convenience and excitement of gambling sites, day trading services, and even auction sites can bring out the worst in someone who has a compulsive money problem. Perhaps you're struggling with one of these issues. For the stability of your finances, relationships, and peace of mind, you need to take steps to break compulsive net behavior today.

This section is drawn with permission from Real Solutions for Overcoming Internet

Addiction, by Steve Watters (Published by: Servant Publications)

Be On Guard

Are you concerned about someone you know who might have an addiction problem? Here are some things to watch for:

- Someone who has withdrawn or seems to have escaped in a dream world, is unwilling to talk about responsibility.
- Is prone to emotional outbursts or anxiousness.
- Is preoccupied with getting ahead without work or effort.
- Has a perceived need for recognition.
- Starts to show up with fancy clothes, trips and cash. They could begin to talk about gifts for a lot of people.
- Has a lot of debt problems.
- Is gone for long periods of time without reason at unusual parts of the day.
- Wants to spend time on the Internet while everyone else is away or gone.

Steps You Can Take

- Sit down and explain your concerns to your family member (or close friend) and ask for some feedback.
- Show them unexplained billings while assuring them you only want to help.
- Encourage them to find some help with a local gambling counseling service, pastor or trusted friends.
- Take steps to physically cut off the venue for gambling as well as access to the supply of money.

Resources for Net Money Compulsions

Web sites

- Center for Online Addiction on Gambling (http://www.netaddiction.com/net_compulsions.htm)
- Center for Online Addiction on Daytrading (<http://www.netaddiction.com/daytrading.htm>)
- Arnie & Sheila Wexler Associates—resource on compulsive gambling (www.aswexler.com)
- Compulsive Gambling Center/Dr. Valerie C. Lorenz (www.lostbet.com)
- Special feature on gambling by Focus on the Family (www.family.org/gambling)

Books

- *House of Cards: Hope for Gamblers and Their Families* by Tom Rabbe (Focus on the Family/Tyndale, 2001)
- *Gambling Addiction: The Problem, the Pain, and the Pathway to Recovery* by John M. Eades (1999)

The Electronic Trojan Horse

The master disguise of music downloads

Once in a while we all hear about someone's experience with an overly friendly neighbor. First it's easy to visit on a regular basis. Soon they're borrowing all the tools, leaving messages that aren't always welcome and chronically inviting themselves in. Before long you have a growing nightmare that is ruining the environment you're trying to protect at home.

For some families this may be happening right underneath their noses. However, the neighbor isn't next door with a picket fence but an international computer network that's dialed right into your home computer.

Most of us are familiar with the downfall of Napster, the software program that used to facilitate music downloads without regard for industry royalties. Napster promised an online catalog of music titles collected from its peer network of computers. U.S. courts put a halt to the practice based in our country. The Internet, however, makes everything possible internationally. Several companies (i.e. KaZaA, AudioGalaxy, iMesh, LimeWire, Qtraxmax Morpheus, Grokster, etc.) have stepped in to facilitate this arrangement from foreign soil. This creates an electronic by-pass around our laws that protect artists' rights for their work.

But the legality of this activity is only the first issue.

These programs are designed to create an international peer-to-peer network of computers without a central catalog anywhere. In other words, there isn't a main computer server that facilitates the exchange of songs (a.k.a. Napster). This model allows a user to download the program right onto their hard drive. Currently over 1.5 million computers world wide have this capacity. Each one is now its own server in a peer-to-peer network. Every computer has access to the others on a "first contact" basis. The software will do a word search by tapping right into each hard drive.

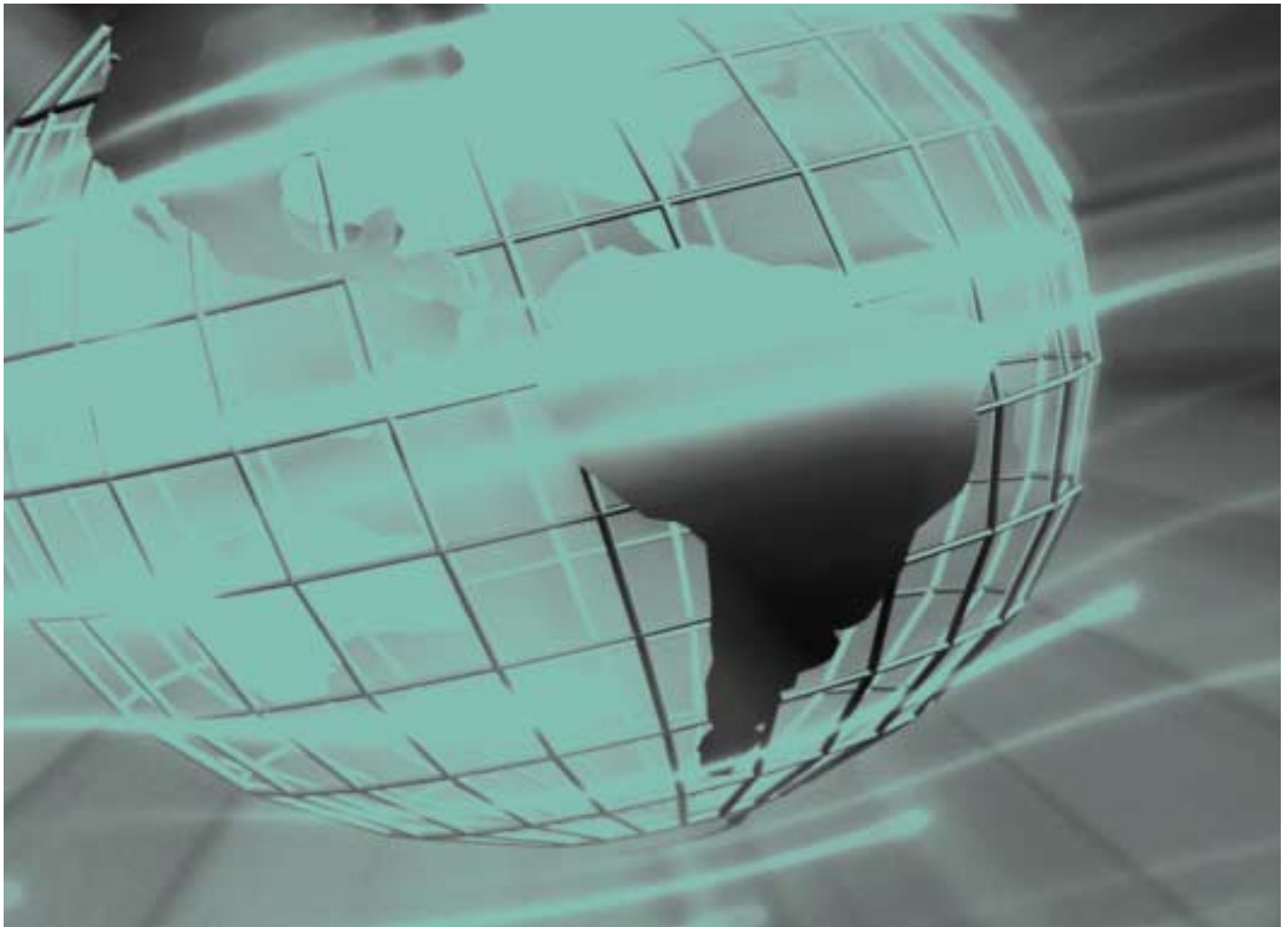
This creates an incredible internet volume issue for ISP providers. Some companies have experienced overload problems trying to deal with the sheer volume of activity that occurs when the kids get out of school. Even at an institutional level (i.e. high schools, colleges, business, etc.) in-house network servers are shutting down since they are unable to deal with the volume of requests. Internet providers can block the site but these software programs are designed to automatically search among the 65,000 ports available until it can get through anyway. ISP providers are left with an expensive

equipment purchase to become capable of stopping all the software designed efforts. You should check with your provider to see what their capacity is for stopping this activity.

Why should you be concerned about this? It represents the status of an "unwelcome neighbor" in three significant ways.

- First, the most prominent words searched for by these programs aren't music related. They are pornographic and obscenity based (i.e. Adult, XXX, porn, sex). Thousands of youth are downloading this software in the afternoon, downloading music that night and learning in a few days they can search for a lot more. After taking all kinds of measures to filter your machine, the thorough search of these programs may be getting past your ISP's best efforts. It is quickly becoming one of the main sources of Internet pornographic activity.
- Secondly, these programs use a type of "spyware" to monitor user activity. Eventually they can capture your e-mail activity and address book to sell to marketing companies. Before long you can





find yourself with more spam than you can imagine. Since it's from a foreign source it is impossible to deal with legally.

- Finally, this network frequently facilitates the activity of "zombie" virus software. It will lay dormant on your computer until another source requests it to come alive. When activated, it can have several effects. A source can actually use this virus to shut down access to an ISP so that all users are prevented from getting in, called a denial of service attack (or DoS). It can create so many activity requests that the ISP provider simply cannot support it. Even more invasive is how this same type of virus software can be used to capture thousands of processors in the network to

solve an equation. In other words, a problem solver needs more computer power and memory than his platform provides. By capturing all these other computers, the problem is divided among them all while they work together to solve it. In the meantime, a user can approach his computer only to find it slow and somewhat unresponsive. It appears normal on the surface, but it's very busy behind the scenes crunching numbers and consuming internet bandwidth. When the problem is solved it wakes up and functions normally after its time in "hijack" mode.

If you are concerned that any of these file sharing programs have been downloaded to your computer, it is possible to remove them

and prevent future intrusion. Unfortunately, due to their nature, KaZaA and other similar programs cannot be completely removed using the Windows remove programs option. It is necessary to either use a program removal tool or to contact your local computer technician who can ensure all traces of the programs are removed and that your unwelcome house guest is finally evicted.

Just like the growing problems of an over friendly neighbor these programs aren't what they seem to be on the surface. Be sure your computer hasn't downloaded one of these programs and that your ISP provider offers you genuine protection.

Resource List

These listings are not meant to be endorsements but are provided as resources for further help.

ORGANIZATIONS

This section lists just a few of the many organizations that are actively fighting the Dark Side of the Internet.

National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families

800 Compton Road, Suite 9224
Cincinnati, OH 45231
513-521-6227
www.nationalcoalition.org

Enough is Enough

746 Walker Road, Suite 116
Great Falls, VA 22066
www.enough.org
www.protectkids.com

Focus on the Family

8605 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80995
719-531-5181
800-A-FAMILY
www.family.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Charles B. Wang International Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175
703-274-3900 or
1-800-THE-LOST
www.missingkids.com

HELPFUL BOOKS

This is an assortment of print materials designed to help individuals and families confront and cope with some Internet related issues.

Pornography Addictions:

Boundaries—Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
Living in Victory—Steve Gallagher
At the Alter of Sexual Idolatry—Steve Gallagher
Every Man's Battle—Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker
Real Solutions for Overcoming Internet Solutions—Steve Watters

Women Living With Disappointment:

Living Through Your Husband's Secret Wars—Marsha Means
When His Secret Sin Breaks Your Heart: Letters to Hurting Wives—Kathy Gallagher
An Affair of the Mind—Laurie Hall

Counseling and Treatment:

Counseling the Sexual Addict—Steve Gallagher
Pure Desires—Ted Roberts
Break Free—Steve Gallagher

About Youth:

Toxic Porn—Gene McConnell (Focus on the Family)
Reviving Ophelia—Mary Pipher

INFORMATIVE WEB LINKS

Here are some web locations you can go to for more information on the subject of Internet safety. These listings do not automatically imply endorsement.

www.georgiafamily.org

Informative web site on critical issues facing the family today with a special emphasis on strengthening marriages, cultivating effective fathers and helping youth remain abstinent until marriage.

www.enough.org/justharmlessfun.pdf

Presents a compelling case that pornography in any form is harmful. (This is a PDF document; if your computer doesn't already have acrobat reader installed, you can download it for free from www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html)

www.enough.org/myths1-9.htm

Convincingly dispels the nine key myths that are typically used in defense of pornography.

www.netaddiction.com

The Center for On-Line Addiction provides additional advice and resource regarding Internet Addiction.

www.fflibraries.org

Family Friendly Libraries is a national grassroots network of concerned citizens, librarians, and library trustees. They promote common sense access policies to protect children from exposure to age-inappropriate materials without parental consent.

www.safetied.org

SafetyEd International advises parents, teachers, schools and libraries about online safety issues for kids when going online.

www.webwisekids.com

Web Wise Kids acts as an internet safety resource center for parents, teachers and children.

www.moralityinmedia.org

Morality in Media is a national, not-for-profit, interfaith organization established in 1962 to combat obscenity and uphold decency standards in the media.

www.getnetwise.org

Setup to help parents deal with the dangers of the Internet with information and recommendations.

www.FilterReview.com

Contains reviews of filtering software and filtered Internet service providers. Produced by the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families as a resource to the public.

www.designpointinc.com

Design & advertising firm responsible for design and production of this publication.

Family-Based Filtered ISPs

A Partial Listing of Family-based Internet Service Providers

If you do not currently receive your Internet service from a family-based group, you may find a provider who meets your specific needs from the following list. Note: This list is provided simply as an overview of family-based Internet Service Providers (ISP's) and does not represent an endorsement.

Service Provider	Web Site	Phone Number	Cost
*American Family Online	www.afo.net	(888) 817-9314	\$21.95
Angel Safe Net	www.angelsafenet.com	(866) 540-1027	\$21.95
CharacterLink	www.characterlink.net	(888) 330-8678	\$10 to \$30
Christian Purity Family Internet	www.christianpurity.com	(800) 791-7011	\$15.95
*Christian Living Network	www.christianliving.net	(888) 772-7355	\$19.95
CleanSurf	www.cleansurf.com	(918) 747-0009	\$4.95
*CleanWeb	www.cleanweb.net	(800) 514-4602	\$21.95
Clear Sail	www.clearsail.net	(888) 905-0888	\$21.95
Covenant Promotions	www.covenantpromotions.com	(888) 564-7555	\$18.95
CyberSafe.net	www.cybersafe.net	(970) 484-1933	\$21.95
Devotional Internet Services	www.dinternet.org	(877) 944-7070	\$21.95
Family.net	www.family.net	(888) 905-0888	\$21.95
Family's Choice	www.familyschoice.com	(866) 234-7233	\$15.95
Freedom ISP	www.freedomisp.net	(866) 841-2544	\$22.95
Fish Net Online	www.fnol.net	(800) 286-2074	\$21.95
Hedgebuilders A+ Filtering	www.hedgebuilders.com	(615) 952-4200	\$36.00 (6 months)
Honorguard	www.honorguard.net	(800) 508-1251	\$17.95
Ineva.com	www.ineva.com	(866) 838-9329	\$19.95
Internet-4Families	www.i4f.com	(888) 654-8288	\$21.95
Integrity Online	www.integrity.com	(866) 449-1736	\$21.95
Mayberry USA	www.mbusa.net	(888) 711-6381	\$21.95
MStar.net	www.mstar2.net	(877) 365-5465	\$19.95
Northern Trail	www.northerntrail.net	(248) 217-2029	\$17.95
PKFamily.com	www.pkfamily.com	(888) 711-6381	\$17.95
Safe Access	www.safeaccess.com	(888) 734-7233	\$17.95
Safe Browse	www.safebrowse.com	(877) 944-7070	\$19.95
Squeaky-Clean.net	www.squeaky-clean.net	(877) 885-5560	\$19.95
WiseChoice.net	www.wisechoice.net	(478) 738-9927	\$30.00 (6 months)
World Christian Online Inc.	www.worldchristian.net	(615) 568-7112	\$17.95
ZOL Online	www.zol.com	(866) 683-6837	\$19.95

*These Internet Service Providers contribute a percentage of their income to ministries.

Georgia Family Council:

An Organizational Overview

Georgia Family Council (GFC) is a non-profit research and education organization that analyzes how cultural trends and public policies affect family life. GFC was established in response to the mounting evidence that family breakdown is at the root of the deterioration of social order and child well-being in our country and state.

GFC seeks to make an impact in three areas:

1. **Informing the public:** We endeavor to inform the public about family issues by providing accurate and timely information to those in the media.
2. **Helping our communities:** Our goal is to foster community-based solutions that strengthen families and connect people to resources that strengthen family relationships.
3. **Assisting policy makers:** We help policy makers and citizens understand laws in light of whether or not they help or harm the family.

GFC labors for changes that will restore strength and stability to Georgia's families and communities. For more information, go to our website at www.georgiafamily.org or call 1-800-FAMILY-1.



GEORGIA FAMILY COUNCIL

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