



## **Confiding in Strangers Online to Provide You with Important Advice**

It's tempting to share secrets or search for places online where you can get advice on things you may not want to discuss with friends or even your parents.

But what makes you think that a stranger in an online forum is smart enough to give good advice? And why would you post information in public that you wouldn't share with family or friends in private?

There are some very good places to visit online where experts can advise you on health, safety and personal matters. But you can't always tell which ones are trustworthy or which ones are crackpots posing as experts. Ask around. Ask your guidance counselor at school, or use a trustworthy resource to help you find one. You can start by looking for a .gov site (they are all run by governmental agencies). Or find a charity you know offline or have heard about in a magazine or on a TV show you trust. Then use privacy settings, a special email address you create just for this and think carefully before you share. The best advice may come from people you trust who know you in real life. But online help can be there when you need it 24/7.

## **Who Knows More – Teens or Parents?**

If we are talking about the Internet, the answer is obvious (even if your dad is Bill Gates). Teens know more about the Internet, at least the way they use it. They know more about cell phones and gaming devices too. But, like it or not, parents know more about life. The good thing is that you can both share what you know with each other pretty easily.

You should "have the talk" with them and let them know you won't do anything stupid, you care about staying safe and know what you need to know to do that. Show them your Facebook profile. (Whether you "friend" them or not is up to you.) Show them where you spend most of your time online. Teach them how you search for things. Help them install and use security software.

And offer to help keep your siblings, nieces, nephews or cousins safer online. Help your parents set up their own Facebook or Flickr account. Show them how YouTube works. (But be careful which videos you show them. ☺) Teach them about privacy settings and remind them to check with you before posting any pics of you online. Talk with them about what you want them to do to help you.

Parry Aftab said "the best filter is the one between your ears." Let your parents know you have a pretty powerful filter that's called good judgment and strong values. Remind them that they can trust you and promise to come to them if anything goes wrong. They can't help you if they don't know you need help. You should never face things alone. That's what families are for. Now, have fun and be safe!