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Security tips on Chat rooms.

There are various internet websites, some designed for children and social networks that people can join, included among those sites are chat rooms. Chat rooms are those social locations on the internet where you can go and simply chat with others about various topics. When you sign up to be a part of a chat room you can be as honest or dishonest about yourself as you wish to be. There is no one to check the validity of your personal description or the truth about yourself. It is because of this trait, that you can be very vulnerable to anyone without good intentions.

Well here are some tips to safeguard you when in internet chat rooms.

1. It is most important to select chat rooms that you know have a moderator. Moderators should be removing from their chat line any individual that express threats, harassment or any other illegal behavior. Should you encounter any activity that makes you uncomfortable, contact and advise the chat line moderator. Children should advise their parents at once and together advise the moderator.

A note to the parents - don't get upset and cut off the computer, be thankful it was brought to your attention.

2. Never tell anyone in a chat line where you go to school, work or any information that could assist them in determining your personal routine. Talk in generalities, and don't get into specifics of your daily hangouts (parks, stores etc.). Don't say where you will be at certain times of the day. You may in your mind be speaking to a specific person, but remember you don't know who is reading your conversations and you could be giving that bad person leads to track you down.

3. You must never give your name, address, phone number or any other personal details within a chat room. This includes your email, if it contains a name or other identifiable word.

4. I can't put it into stronger words but **DO NOT** meet anyone in person that you have just met off the internet. Friends will say "it is no big deal" or "I do that all the time", but it is no different then hitchhiking. You wouldn't get into a car with a stranger, nor should you meet with a stranger.

If you decide to go against this advice, here are a few tips:

- Meet in a very public place like a restaurant, library.
- Make sure you tell people exactly where you are going and everything you know about this meeting.
- Get someone to watch the meeting from nearby. Dads love to do this.

- Get someone to pick you up from this public place and drive you away. You don't want to be followed. Don't accept a ride home from this individual.
- Ask if you can bring a friend. Most serious individuals will not mind. If they say yes then bring the friend. If they say no, ask why.

This is about your safety. If you start mixing the real world with your computer world you most often will be in for a big letdown or an unpleasant surprise.

5. Be very cautious about posting any pictures of yourself. Young persons should not put their picture on line. Facebook is slightly different as you can control who accesses your site. It is suggested that a graphic or logo may be the best way to handle this issue.

6. If someone on a chat line wants to send you a file or link to a site, be very leery of a computer virus or opening a shocking picture. It is best to just ignore those type of things.

7. Consider limiting the chat room to people within your own circle of friends and family. You can create your own chat room. Facebook calls them groups and you can control who comes into your circle of friends.

My final words are it is unfortunate, but there are many people online who are dangerous. It is up to you to keep your personal radar up to make sure you are not putting yourself at risk. No matter how many times you may have chatted with someone in a site, you do not know them. They are a stranger. Everything they could have told you could be a lie.

The above security tips may not apply to each and every one of you. You have to determine how many apply to you personally. What is your vulnerability level? Don't under estimate it. If you are a child or young adult, I believe most of the tips apply. Older adults may feel more comfortable providing some personal information about their lives. Everyone has to know there comfort zone.

Safe Chatting



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