

The desire to communicate

One of the strongest desires we have is to communicate. Young people need to communicate in order to grow, be challenged, feel valued, form friendships, enjoy relationships and learn about themselves as well as the world they live in.

Digital Social Networks allow parents and caregivers who are lucky enough to be part of their child's online community an opportunity to support them as they exercise their right to communicate. Even help them if they make mistakes, but this opportunity should not be used as an occasion to judge or over-react if they don't like their child's tone.

If parents don't learn to trust and react appropriately, young people will simply go underground and find others ways to stay off the radar. Then when they really need help we may not be available to them. We need to educate youth properly and allow them to go online and experience this digital space appropriately.

Education, parental support, trust and parental acknowledgment of a young persons right to communicate is the key to helping them learn to navigate this technology with safety in mind. This education also needs to teach young people that they have a responsibility for the well-being of the person sitting next to them in the classroom and the people they share their lives with.

This technology connects us with the rest of the world and it disconnects us at the same time. Now, more than ever before we need to nurture empathy in our children. This is because the ability to think about how another person is feeling, is a vital tool children require as they navigate the digital space. They will communicate with people they will never meet, they will debate with them, share ideas with them and even argue with them. They are able to experience cultures thousands of miles away at no cost! when disaster strikes in faraway locations they become instantly aware of it, perhaps while walking down the aisle of their local supermarket or reading a book in class, and they are able, if they so choose, to help those people by rallying local government or local businesses to send financial aid, food and other resources. What a marvellous tool ICT is and what a powerful light it shines on the world allowing us to experience and see more of it....good and bad.

The only choice we have is whether to follow young people into the cyber world and assist and support them or control and police them. Either way they will use this technology because the desire to communicate is very powerful.

John Parsons
Internet Safety and Risk Assessment Consultant
M: 027 746 9877

www.simulate2educate.co.nz

www.johnparsons.nz

