ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Volume 5, Issue 1

2013 was heralded as the year of the selfie - it seemed like everyone was getting in on some selfie action! From the Pope to politicians, musicians to morons and everyone in between, so many people were snapping photos of themselves and sharing them online. According to Oxford Dictionaries, usage of the word 'selfie' increased by over 17,000% in just 12 months, making it their Word of the Year 2013. If posing, editing and posting pictures of ourselves were the most talked about activities last year, what can we expect in the world of social media for 2014?

Many commentators will give you their opinion on what will be big in 2014, but at the end of the day, it's not what everyone else is doing that should be of concern; it's what your child is up to that should be the priority. In our first ThinkUKnow e-newsletter for 2014, we're going to provide some advice on how to find out what 2014 means for your child, and how you can help them to become safe and ethical citizens.

You've got to twerk* it out
Talk to your child about what they enjoy doing online or what they've heard about others doing. Don't claim to know 'what's cool' at the moment or randomly drop buzz words - your child's reaction will most likely be to roll their eyes at you (we reserve the right to drop buzz words in this e-newsletter!). Even if you think you know what the latest social media craze is, act dumb and ask your child to explain what something is.

Showing your child that you are interested in their digital activities will help them to become more comfortable talking about any issues they may experience with digital media. Asking questions about digital activities will also assist your child to evaluate why people engage in such behaviour, consider potential consequences and decide what actions they will take. You might even learn something yourself!

*dance to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low, squatting stance (Oxford Dictionary)

I neknominate* you
Don't outsource your child's digital education solely to others; take on some of that responsibility at home. We're all time poor, but we cannot underestimate our influence on others, particularly children and young people. Have a look at your own use of social media and digital technology, what behaviours are you modelling for your child? No one expects you to be perfect, but take some time to review how you manage your privacy, relationships and reputation online and think about what safe and ethical behaviours you could pass onto your child.

As you start your back to school preparations, take a moment to think about how you can work with your child's school to encourage the safe and ethical use of technology. Find out what policies the school has around the use of
technology, dealing with bullying and harassment and promoting a safe and supportive school environment. If you can, get involved in parent committees, but at the very least, read the acceptable use of technology policy before you sign it.

*practice of posting a video of oneself sculling an alcoholic beverage on Facebook and nominating two others (by way of tagging them) to do the same (Urban Dictionary)*

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**Time2Talk**

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

**What are your social media predictions for 2014?**

**How safe do you think I am online?**

**When do you think it is ok for me to look at what you are doing online?**

**Where can I go to find out more information about social media?**

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**Don't go catfishing* for trouble**

If we are trying to encourage young people to respect others' privacy, relationships and reputations, we need to respect the privacy, relationships and reputation of young people themselves. Installing tracking software or other surreptitious programs on your child's device without their knowledge is probably not the best way to monitor their activities and is likely to drive their usage underground with no supervision or monitoring. If you own the device and pay the bills, you have a responsibility to make sure it is used ethically, explain that to your child and discuss what options are available to make sure your child is safe.

You may like to ask your child to write their passwords in a sealed envelope that you can open in case of emergency, or ask your child to help you choose a filtering program to use on devices, but be honest and upfront with these activities. You are responsible for the safety of your child, but there are some underhanded techniques that may seem helpful, but could actually undermine the safety of your child.

*catfish - refers to an online hoax or false identity, based on the film and subsequent TV series 'Catfish'*

**Be critical of what you binge-watch**

Social media and teenagers make for great headline, but take every news story with a grain of salt. Uncover the truth yourself about what activities your child is involved with, don't assume the worst. If a news item causes you some concern, look into the issue for yourself by researching it online, talking to your child and talking to other parents. Not only will you become more informed on the issue, but you will also have a better understanding of how to manage it with your child.

No one said parenting in the 21st century was easy. There is so much information thrown at us that it can be hard to determine fact from fiction. Critically assess any advice your given, trust your instincts, apply it to your family and if you have any questions, just ask someone!

*the practice of watching television for longer time spans than usual, usually of a single television show, often associated with online media services (Wikipedia)*