

**INSTRUCTING TODAY'S YOUTH
ABOUT BEING "SAFE" IN THE
LAND OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

LEGAL AND REPUTATIONAL
CONSEQUENCES OF INAPPROPRIATE
SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES

UNIT 3 LESSON

REAL LIFE SCENARIO #1

In 2009, three teenage girls at Greensburg Salem High School in Western Pennsylvania sent nude or seminude cellphone pictures of themselves to their boyfriends.

What do you think happened to them?



REAL LIFE SCENARIO #1 (CONTINUED)

All six were charged with child pornography, a felony that carries draconian sentences and lifelong consequences such as registering as a sex offender.

Do you think that was an appropriate sentence?



FACTS

- “Under House Bill 815, (Pennsylvania) youths 12 to 17 who send, view, or disseminate sexually explicit images can be charged with a misdemeanor or summary offense, depending on the circumstances. Instead of jail time and a tarnished future, offenders will be allowed to enter a diversionary educational program and afterward have their records wiped clean.”
- “Since 2009, at least 19 states, including New Jersey, have enacted bills to address youth sexting, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. This year, 13 states introduced or are considering sexting laws.”

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

“Cyber bullies face very serious consequences. Many cases of cyber bullying include some form of hacking, password or identity theft, or stalking, all of which carry criminal charges. Law enforcement, including the FBI, might get involved. Here are potential consequences if found guilty:

- **Federal charges.** A federal law pending in Congress since 2009 is the Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act. The person convicted would be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.
- **Prosecution under stalker laws.** Many states have updated their stalking laws to include electronic/cyberspace harassment. They include Arizona, Alaska, Connecticut, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma and Wyoming and the list is growing.
- **Criminal charges filed under U.S. state law** are punishable by both fines and jail time. Of the 44 states with bullying laws, five have cyber bullying laws and another 30 states include electronic harassment, according to an Oct. 2010 State Cyberbullying Laws Fact Sheet compiled by the Cyberbullying Research Center.
- **School suspensions.** If it happens at school, disciplinary measures would be determined in accordance with the school’s code of conduct or policy prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation. Punishments established by the school board, district or school include suspension from sports teams and school suspensions. Repeated offenses result in the student having to change schools.
- **Internet Service Provider (ISP) account closure and/or banishment.”**

Source: <http://www.justaskgemalto.com/us/surfing/tips/what-consequences-do-cyber-bullies-face>

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

- ***“Google yourself”*** – Everything that is put online remains online even when it’s believed to be deleted. Personal information can be online through an online signup for messaging service or old profiles. The privacy box on many sites helps protect the information posted and can prevent the information from being shared to the viral world. As simple as the area code on a phone number, the slightest information can lead a predator to anyone’s front door!
- ***How to “Google yourself”*** – First you have to go to <http://www.google.com/>. Anything that needs to be searched is placed in quotation marks in order to make the search specific. Information from nick names, email addresses, full names, phone numbers, IM screen names, or addresses can be searched to become aware what is available online.
- ***If unwanted information is found*** – Contact Google to disable the information or contact the site to have it removed. This can become difficult because many websites do not care about what is posted on their site, regardless of their terms of service. This is why it is important to take precautionary measures to avoid the difficulty involved in getting information removed.

INTERNET GOLDEN RULES

- ***When sending an email, text, or instant message*** make sure the destination is correct. This ensures that if any personal information or private message is sent to the right person.
- ***Is the information worthy to be sent?*** Many times junk emails, false rumors, or unnecessary information is passed along. Jokes can be taken differently by each person. Make sure you are not wasting people's time with unwanted messages or information. It is important to make sure information is true before passing it along because it can cause cyber-rumors that can cause harm to others.
- ***Proofread and spell-check*** what you want to say so you get the correct idea across and the receiver know who you are. Misunderstood messages can lead to unwanted rumors. In instant messaging rules appear to be different with grammar and spelling errors but make sure the message is clear.
- ***Make sure what is said will not be come across as insulting or attacking*** to others online. Unless you are comfortable with the recipient, reframe from controversial topics, such as politics, religion, race, sex, nationalism, war, physical or mental illness, money, or gender issues that may offend them. Be cautious when communicating with someone from another culture. What is acceptable in your culture, can be insulting in their culture.

INTERNET GOLDING RULES (CONTINUED)

- ***Do not forward other's messages without their permission.*** Without realizing a mistake, many people forward messages without knowing it could offend the other person. In some situations, the sender does not want to have their information or message sent to other people.
- ***Avoid sending messages when angry.*** Like face-to-face conversations, unwanted words and actions are expressed when angry. The difference is emails or messages can be copied and used as evidence if the situation gets out of hand. Take time to cool down before replying to messages.
- ***Make sure not to reply to spam!*** Spam emails are old and do not work. When you reply you either send to a fake address or you let them know your address is active and they will continue with more messages. After the spammer is aware of an active address, they are able to sell the address for money with the promise the account will work.
- ***Before sending, ask if you are willing to have others read the message if the information was released.*** Like mentioned before, many times messages and emails are unknowingly forwarded to others not knowing if the sender wanted to keep the information concealed or not. Common rule of emailing is “don't say anything they wouldn't write on a postcard”. When having a private conversation, it is best to talk over the phone or person-to-person to insure it is a concealed conversation.

Source: stopbullying.org

