kids in the know®

Personal Safety & Healthy Child Development

For parents with children **8–9 YEARS**

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators with background information on child development and personal safety that will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

The Growing Personality

Children 8 to 9 years of age...

» Take games very seriously and losing can be taken personally.

» Fantasy play becomes more realistic (i.e. police vs. Power Rangers®).

» Identity is joined with parents. They can show embarrassment over their parent's behaviour.

» Embarrassment and disapproval can be very upsetting.

» Enter the complex world of peer relationships.

» Language development helps deepen relationships. It is common for girls to build relationships through talking while boys tend to build relationships through activity.

» Peer relationships become important and interactions are based upon rules. Recognition of a pecking order begins.

» Self-image becomes defined by how peers treat them (i.e. if a friend doesn't like them, they may take it as a personal failure).

» Start comparing their body image to others.

» May make inaccurate judgments about their appearance.

» Begin to understand varying levels of feelings as opposed to things being black and white (such as being a little happy versus being elated and being a little angry versus being furious) which helps build more stable relationships.

» Security grows as they learn to understand how relationships work. They may feel insecure if they have difficulty with social skills.

» Acquire pride and enjoyment from doing something well (e.g. academics, sports, music, art, friendships, games, etc.).

» Have little abstract thinking. Their feelings are directly related to what they are thinking at the time.

» Start to seek some privacy (e.g. start deciding how their bedroom should look, asking people to knock before entering their room, etc.).

» Test parental limits through negative behaviour as it helps them learn appropriate behaviour.

What do 8- to 9-year-old children want to do?

» Use online games.

» Use instant messaging (e.g. Windows Live™ Messenger, Yahoo!® Messenger, etc.).

» Use email.

» Use the Internet for school work.

» Use search engines (e.g. Google®, Yahoo!®, Bing™, etc.).

» Go to birthday parties.

» Go to sleepovers.

» Take part in extra-curricular activities.

» Do more independent activities (i.e. bike rides, going to the park, walking to friends' houses, etc.).

© 2011, and all trade-marks owned by, Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. All rights reserved, except users may make copies strictly for instructional purposes.
Kids in the Know is a program of CANADIAN CENTRE for CHILD PROTECTION™ Helping families. Protecting children.

Things to Consider

» Review with children that the Internet is a public place just like the store, the neighbourhood, the playground or going to someone's house. Set the expectation that you will monitor them online to increase their safety.

» Use parental controls on your computer.

» Balance the amount of time children spend online with offline activities.

» Ensure that children are not communicating in chatrooms as these areas are typically unregulated.

» Caution should be given to whether children at this age are ready to join instant messaging (e.g. MSN®, Yahoo!®, AIM®, etc.), or social networking sites (e.g. Facebook®, MySpace®, etc.). A high level of adult supervision is necessary. Keep in mind that most games have an interactive chat component.

» Know your children's passwords and screen names.

» Discuss appropriate and inappropriate material. This could lead to a review of the difference between respecting and breaking boundaries.

» Explain that no one should ask children to take their clothes off (the exception being for medical purposes).

» Review OKAY and NOT OKAY touching.

» If exposed to inappropriate material online (e.g. sexually explicit material, violent material, etc.), teach them to leave the computer and tell a *safe adult*.

» Teach them to trust their instincts. Use "what if" scenarios to help them anticipate possible situations and practice appropriate responses if someone breaks their personal boundaries.

» Explain that pictures should only be accepted, taken or sent online with parental permission.

» Review the difference between a *KEEP Secret* and a *SPEAK Secret*. A *KEEP Secret* is harmless and will eventually come out, like a birthday present; a *SPEAK Secret* is one that children are told never to tell, like someone speaking sexually to them. They will need to tell a *safe adult* about *SPEAK Secrets*.

» Begin discussions about the concept of anonymity on the Internet and how people can misuse personal information online.

» Talk about friendship: what it is and isn't. Explain that new friendships online need to be adult supervised and that children should never meet in person anyone they have first met online without an accompanying parent.

» Ensure they have a few *safe adults* who they can talk to about anything (e.g. a parent, aunt, grandparent, teacher, etc.)

This information sheet was created after consulting sources such as: Linda Ashford; Sharon Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson; Jay Giedd; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman; Michael Gurian; Kenneth Lanning; Mary Anne Layden and Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman; Amy Lynch; Jean Piaget; David Soussa; Deborah Yurgelun-Todd. Final content and arrangement is the responsibility of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.

© 2011, and all trade-marks owned by, Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. All rights reserved, except users may make copies strictly for instructional purposes.