

## WHY DO KIDS LOOK FOR TROUBLE?

We try to make everything safe and secure for our children and yet many will not heed the warnings and they stray directly into danger's path. Even intelligent, levelheaded kids will place themselves in harm's way when using the Internet. Why do teens go looking for trouble when they have been warned over and over?

- They want to meet new friends. Many teens view talking with people they have met online as social networking and a way to meet new people. "It has become an accepted practice to talk to people online that they don't know." In a national survey (conducted by Cox Media and The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children), when asked about communicating with someone they have never met in person, "40% of teens reported they usually reply and chat with someone they don't know."
- Most teens think, "It will never happen to me!" Many teens feel safe and secure while talking with someone they don't know online. They think they will never have a face-to-face meeting with this person. There lies the danger! The risk in this false security is that after communicating for a while, teens start to believe this person is a close friend. Before long, they may become close enough to say "yes" to a personal meeting.
- A feeling of insecurity. The thrill of being someone they are not. Just as predators use the Internet to conceal their identity, many teens do the same thing. In public, they may be shy and withdrawn, but on the Internet, where there is no face-to-face contact, they may exhibit bold personality traits. They find fun in teasing a stranger—making this person believe they are older and more experienced.

Do all you can to build a close, trusting relationship with your teen, but as we all remember from our teen years, there are some things we do not want to discuss with our own parents. The last thing teens want to hear is advice from Mom or Dad. If you sense that your teen is in trouble and they will not confide in you, encourage them to talk to an older teen or adult you know and trust. This person should be someone who will counsel your teen wisely.

Don't let your pride stand in the way of protecting your child. Reach out and remove them from danger—even if it is not your hand that saves them!