Parenting Suggestions Regarding Technology

Become involved in your child's cyberspace. Sit at the computer and let them teach you how they use the Internet:

- Ask them to take you places they frequently visit and show you what they do. Three types of sites children commonly utilize are:
    o Instant messaging services (e.g. Yahoo, AOL IM and Messenger)
    o Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace)
    o Video posting (e.g. Youtube, AOL Video)
- Open up you own accounts where they have accounts. Have your child guide you through the process
- If your child is under 13, you do have the option to have these accounts deleted since most of these services have an age and/or parental consent requirement.
- Have them share with you all their user account names and passwords. If this is creating a trust issue, perhaps a good compromise is to have your child write down all the user account names and passwords on a sheet of paper and place this in a sealed envelope to only be opened by the parent in case of an emergency.
- Make certain they have never and will never share their passwords with anyone, even a friend. Explain the risk of someone impersonating them and ruining their reputation.
- Have them show you what they have in their profiles/pages. How do they describe themselves? Is it all accurate and appropriate? Does it show too much detail about your child? Are they protecting and sustaining a positive reputation?
- Scrutinize their friend lists on these accounts. It is very important to recognize the identity of each person. If they don't know the real name of an on-line friend, then consider that person a stranger. Request they delete and block that person.
- Ask your child if they have ever been ridiculed, intimidated and/or humiliated on the Internet (cyberbullied). Encourage them to come to you for support if they are being bullied. Both of you should learn how to use the print screen option to save evidence of the cyberbullying.
- Ask whether they have bullied anyone. It's important for them to appreciate how much emotional pain can be inflicted by unkind words or images, and that the reach of the Internet makes it far more destructive. Use Ryan's story to make the point.