

ETIPS & TRAPS: Social media really isn't for everyone

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How about having some Nazis, skinheads and Satan worshipers over for tea and cookies in your family room? Don't worry: They're already there.

Of course, most people don't just let anyone into their homes. But, the internet does.

When you connect to any chats or social networks, you are connected to anyone - we do mean anyone - and everyone.

On Facebook - if your security settings are not adjusted - your information can be seen by anyone with an internet connection.

We talked with the mother of a nine-year-old girl recently about chats the youngster thought she was having with Justin Bieber. We surmised the pop product himself probably doesn't have time to chat with the youngster, or the other 847 friends on this particular account. That's right, this Justin Bieber has only 847 friends, not the gazillion this actual persona might.

Among many other lures, there are perhaps thousands of groups which can add unsuspecting "friends" willy nilly. Just to cite one: a Nazism group administrator recently wrote, "Hi everybody who wants join my group and sympathize with Mr Josef Mengele please contact me!" The group not only spelled Mengele's name correctly, it generated a prompt and positive response.

There is also what some might call extremist behavior by parents in the face of virtually unlimited free expression.

A gunslinger North Carolina father, angry when his daughter complained about chores in a Facebook rant, pumped nine hollow-point bullets into her laptop. Tommy Jordan posted his analysis and target practice on YouTube, generating more than 27 million views as of last weekend. Viewers had favored his tactics by a margin of more than 10 to one.

Parents with a more moderate approach might want to get to know their younger children's virtual friends.

We suggest all social media users consider the following:

- * In line at the grocery store, you probably don't tell a stranger your date of birth, where you live and your phone number. On the other hand, you have a right to expect that a bank official or cellular store employee will protect such information. On dating sites, don't enter your full date of birth. Put in the wrong day. On Facebook, don't enter the year of your birth. Certainly, do not enter the correct year.
- * Do not alert burglars and other friends when you are going on vacation or, once you get there, that you are having a great time. Families from many states have returned home to find their homes ransacked and robbed of valuables.
- * Remember that when you post photos of children, pretty much anyone could take a look -- even predators or other monsters.

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