4 Online Safety Tips for Parents

Rob Nickel is a former police sergeant who worked undercover for the Ontario, Canada, police to catch hundreds of online predators. He now trains police and parents to do the same.

1. It can happen to anyone.

Rob stresses that even straight-A students who never get into trouble can fall victim to a child predator. "They're kids; they trust everybody," Robs says. Teaching your kids street smarts is essential. "I talk to a lot of small communities, and I try to get that across."

2. Predators will build a bond.

Rob says child predators treat sexual assaults as a job. "They have one goal, and the biggest accomplishment you can have is that sexual encounter with a child," he says. "And the grooming process—it's so easy to build a bond online. You have to understand, most of our communication, 93 percent, is what I'm doing with my hands right now, my voice inflexion. When all you have to judge somebody by is text, it's very easy to build a bond."

Predators are also patient, and Rob says they will go through great lengths to find a child. "It happens anywhere, and as you've seen, they don't mind traveling. In fact, they don't care if it takes a year to build a bond with kids."

3. Don't share pictures of your child over the Internet.

"Number one, you won't find my children on the Internet," Rob says. "A lot of parents will put their kids as infants. Well, I've done so many search warrants where we seize pictures people have downloaded off the Internet of infants and 2- and 3-year-olds for sexual gratification. I would never put my children on the Internet."

If you want to share pictures with your family and friends on social networking sites such as Facebook, Rob says to make sure your security settings are set so that only your friends can

view the images. " A lot of people leave it wide open for the whole world to see, and that's probably one of the biggest mistakes. Most social networking sites out there will have security features in place under the privacy setting."

4. Install safety software

Rob's suggestions...

For Filtering and Blocking:
Razzul
Net Nanny

For Monitoring:
McGruff
Spector Pro

Related Resources

- KidInnovation.com
- NetNanny.com
- GoMcGruff.com
- SpectorSoft.com

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