

Classroom CONNECTIONS

DIGITAL TATTOOS

T2, 2016

How do you feel about your child getting a tattoo? Many parents may be shocked to discover that their child already has one – a digital tattoo that is.

Digital tattoos tell the story of you, just as body art tells a story. The choices we make online are like tattoos. Our online presence may be the first thing people notice about us, and once they are there, they are permanent.

Before you post consider this:

Online is a public place – Everything we do online is public, and it is the biggest public place our children will ever hang out. Once online they are potentially connected to up to 3.2 billion people. “The Internet mirrors, magnifies, and makes more visible the good, bad, and ugly of everyday life.” (Danah Boyd). How does your child feel about that post being exposed in a public place? Would you shout that comment that you are about to text out loud in a crowded shopping centre? Is that a photo you want exposed outside the school gates tomorrow morning? If the answer is “No!”, then do they really want to share it?

Your personal brand – What does this picture say about your personal brand? We are all creating a brand, consciously or unconsciously, every time we go online. That personal brand represents us, and we need to consider if we are clear about what it is. What are your values, your passions and your pursuits? We can all build a positive reputation by showing our volunteer work, achievements in sport or the arts, and things that we want people to know about us. It takes consideration to conscientiously establish a positive brand, and continued work to maintain that brand and to build a positive online presence that will stand out and be useful in the future.

Take a minute – Taking a moment to think before you post helps to avoid silly mistakes. Many a person has

fallen into the trap of behaving with impulsiveness and bravado on social networking sites. Take the time to consider the consequences. That video that you just shared with your friends for fun, has just been inked to your brand. What might a future employer, partner or university selector think about it when they go searching for you online? If you didn't know you, what would you think about this post? What impression would you have of the person who posted it?

Permission – Have you asked your friends permission to use that photo? People can enforce rules when photos and videos are being taken at a private place. For this reason, it is respectful to consider gaining consent before taking them, and also requesting permission to post that photo or video onto a social media site. Digital tattoos are inked by the information we post about ourselves as well as the information other people post about us. It is probably best not to trample on another person's identity – we all appreciate being able to define who we are, and not be told or judged by the influence of others. It is not only what we share about ourselves, but also what our connections (and their privacy settings) say about us that affect our digital tattoo.

Safer Sharing

Control – When we share something online we can very easily lose control of it. What we post can be copied, changed and shared without us even knowing. It is not as simple as just removing something we don't like or regret putting out there. Our information is archived in servers and search engines, and we cannot control how others store and share our material. Mind your privacy and ensure that you have settings set correctly and geo-location technology on only where essential. The key is to have control over who and what people can find out about you.

Don't be an open book – The more we share the more people can learn about us. We might post our birthday on one site, our address on another, and personal details or situations in a gaming or social networking account. One plus one always makes two and dots can be easily connected.

The ripple effect - is based on the understanding that we are all connected. Everything we do and think affects the people in our lives and their reactions in turn affect others. The choices we make have far-reaching consequences. Today, young person's lives are documented daily, both by themselves as well as by their friends and family. Encourage your child to think about what influence might that post have on others?

Know your connections –We need to choose consciously who we connect to. In many cases young people may get a request from someone they don't know, so they do their own online investigation and often feel comfortable adding the person if they notice at least one other friend has allowed them on as a follower. Even when they add people they actually know "Oh ya – I know Sarah she's a girl in grade 9", we need to encourage to think if this new friend will take responsibility with what she shares?

Know your sites – made a comment that you regret? As a conscientious digital citizen we need to be aware of how to remove information from sites that we use. If someone posts something about you that you are not happy about, you should ask them to take it down and they refuse, make sure you know how to report it. Visit

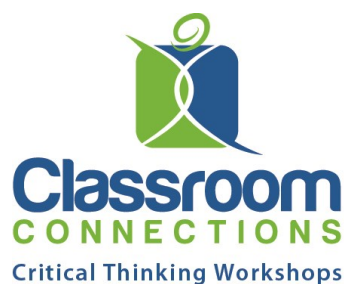
www.esafety.gov.au to learn more.

What parents can do.

Help them design their own tattoo - Online is an amazing space where your child can collaborate, create and construct. We actually want children engaged online and designing their own positive reputation. Contrary to many parental beliefs we actually need to encourage our children to use social media (following the age guidelines of course!) to start forming their positive online identity. With little digital identity information available someone else could do it for them and their digital reputation may be at stake. This comes back to the personal branding component of digital citizenship – and it is crucial for youth today.

Think before you ink - with every new profile, post or photo just imagine you are adding another tattoo. We all have one and people we know, as well as those we don't, can see it and learn a lot from it. We are all quite familiar with the concept of a digital footprint, however footprints can be washed away in the next wave or high tide. Online is permanent, like the ink in a tattoo.

Youth are still developing their critical thinking skills. Today's online permanent records don't leave much room for children to make developmental mistakes that may create lasting proof and possible longstanding embarrassment. Each of us carries within us the capacity to change the world in small ways for better, let's work on showing that through our tattoos.



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