

Would you let your child fall off a cliff?

Of course you would not and no parent would do that knowingly. However, if you are not aware of what your child is doing on the internet and who they are in contact with, then your child could be in substantial danger without you knowing about it.

There are many obviously dangerous sites on the internet, and you may have educated your children about them. These would most likely be sites which depict pornography, or violence, or racial hatred. But other sites, which are seemingly innocent, are far from it for our young Ahmadi boys and girls in reality.

Social Networking web sites like FACEBOOK, MYSPACE and BEBO pose a substantial risk to our children.

There are many internet dangers but lets focus on just one of the most popular category of web sites which children use today, these web sites are called Social Networking sites, examples of these include Facebook, Myspace, Bebo and many others.

HERE'S HOW THESE WEB SITES WORK:

They are the bulletin boards i.e. a space where anyone can post a comment, picture or view point, of kids' lives where Instant Messaging is a key feature. Kids choose a screen name (**which they probably won't share with you**) and fill out a profile containing information about their ages, hometown, schools, likes, and dislikes. **Kids post pictures**, favorite songs, links to things they love. They invite friends to their site to post comments. **This information could then be available to everyone in the world to see!!!** Kids are also lulled into a sense of security by an assurance provided from these sites that whatever they post on these websites, or their bulletin boards, will only be accessible to those who they (i.e. the kids) authorise. Thus a group of friends will have access to each other's site as they could share their

password. They seemingly will exchange writings, and photographs of each other, or any photos they upload on their site – and this could and does include photos of other family members.

HERE IS A TRUE STORY

highlighting the substantial dangers of websites like Facebook, Myspace and Bebo

On Monday 7th Jan 2008 there was an excellent Panorama TV program on dangers of the internet. We strongly recommend all parents watch this program with their children. A link to this program is available on the tarbiyyat.org web site Two young girls decided to plan a trip to central London and communicated their plan to do so via a social networking site. But the girls didn't realise their profiles were attracting an admirer. The admirer gave the name "Popcorn Puppy" and asked to be put on their list of buddies. Popcorn claimed to be a 26 year old woman wanting to be a virtual friend and started messaging them. Later they would find out he was a man! To cut a long story short, the two girls arrived at their meeting point and were surprised they were being stalked by a man. The police were called and the man was arrested but potentially the girls could have been harmed by this paedophile.

Closer to home now, **an Ahmadi girl was accosted on the internet by someone posing to be a non-Ahmadi interested in the Jama'at.** She was led into doing tabligh to him in order to convert him. Matters progressed and romance blossomed. The boy offered marriage, and was told by the girl to approach her parents. However, the boy presented himself at the doorstep of this girl and declared love and his proposal of marriage. He was told to approach via his parents, but he declined that, and started to display worrying and threatening behavior towards the parents. It transpired that this boy had been expelled from the Jama'at for breach of Jama'at regulations. It also

transpired that the same boy had also tried the same tactic with another Ahmadi girl, who was saved in the nick of time. There he had wormed his way into her affections by declaring her to be a very pious girl as she had not displayed her photo on the internet, unlike some other girls. He declared his undying devotion to her because she and he were like minded, and religious piety was at the forefront of his consideration when considering a partner for life. He would use many quotations from Jama'at elders and the Khulafa to home in his point. Again, the girl was saved in the nick of time by the timely intervention of some sympathetic friends. I hope these true stories highlight to you how easy it is for our children to 'fall off the internet cliff' and God forbid sustain serious harm.

Above all, we must seek Allah's help to safeguard our children from all types of dangers. May Allah enable us all to bring up our children in the most excellent manner according to the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, Amin.

What can I do about these substantial risks posed to my children?

- Never put a computer in a child's bedroom.
- Move it to a common room/busy family room where the parents in particular can keep an eye on what the child is doing on the computer.
- The dangers are huge compared to the benefits therefore **NEVER** let your children (Under 12's) use Social Networking sites like Facebook, Myspace and Bebo etc.

For the bigger age group a ban is unlikely to work hence we strongly recommend you discuss the use of these sites with your children clearly and openly.

GET THEIR AGREEMENT THAT THEY WILL NEVER POST PHOTOS OF ANYONE ON THESE SITES.

Also, never put your personal profile on these sites as it is easily accessible. Your friends already know who you are, and there is no need to invite friends from the wider internet community when you don't know who will contact you.

DO NOT BE COMPLACENT, YOU MUST ALWAYS BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING ON THE COMPUTER.

Get your child into the habit of sharing all his/her passwords with you starting from a young age so you are free to check at any time what they are doing.

More Internet Safety Tips available on the tarbiyyat website (please see details below). This includes:

- Link to BBC Panorama Investigation into dangers of Social Networking sites like Facebook, Myspace and Bebo etc.
- Substantial risks of computer games, etc

For more information on internet dangers please go to the following web site:

www.tarbiyyat.org

Then Click on '**Internet Dangers**' button on bottom left hand side of screen.

If you have any questions on internet dangers please email: **info@tarbiyyat.org.uk**

Please put in the title bos of youe email enquiry: '*FAO : Hanif Shakir Naib Secretary Tarbiyyat UK*'