**Internet Safety**

**By Adam Hederman**

Hello reader,

It’s fair to say that nearly everyone these days uses the internet. Whether it’s playing games online or chatting with your friend on social media, it’s not mad to say that it’s a good thing to have around. But when giving access and communication to millions of people around the world, you are always going to find people trying to take advantage of this power.

It is now more important than ever to properly manage internet safety. Trolls and hackers in online video games are bad enough. But some people lose everything from jobs to money because they were not careful about who they talked to online. In fact, you might not even be talking to a real person. This article is here to inform and educate you on how you can use the internet safely and why you need to.

The danger that can stem from internet misuse is a vast and diverse portfolio of things from scamming on the phone to identity theft. Misusing the internet can leave you vulnerable to fraudulent and abusive people whose intentions may not be what they seem. Scam texts, scam calls and cyberbullying are just some of the problems stemming from internet misuse today. I think it’s important to know what these are and how to protect yourself against them. Let’s start with scamming.

I am sure at least one person reading this has had that text. The one going “Hi! Im Jared what’s your name, how old are you what’s your address?” It’s so obvious it’s a scam that it’s insulting. Other ones are a bit more inconspicuous. Like getting a call from “An Garda Siochona” for example. These texts can also usually be spotted as a scam because the phone number is unusual. The main annoyance with these texts is the sheer volume of them. They don’t stop.

Here are the things you should always do to protect yourself against scam texts.

* Block and report the number or person.
* Inform your parent/guardian.
* If It seems more serious, contact the Garda.

These three steps do a world of good, and they are easy. But not all scams are this obvious. A lot of scams out there are extremely sophisticated and effective. The 2017 Annual Fraud Indicator estimated that around 190 billion pounds was lost due to scams that year in the UK alone. In The US by June 2021 roughly 59.4 million Americans had reported being scammed through their phones with a total estimated loss of 29.8 billion USD.

Now these Facts are shocking but they may not hit very close to home. Which brings me to my other point. Cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is unbelievably serious nowadays. With the growth of social media and the increased accessibility of the internet it has become much more easy to communicate without needing to be face to face. This has given rise to people abusing from behind a screen. It’s so easy which is why it’s so common.

Approximately 18% of youths report to have self-harmed at least once due to cyberbullying. Worse still, students who have experienced bullying or cyberbullying are nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide. Suicide ideation and attempts amongst adolescents have nearly doubled since 2008 making suicide the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10-34. These numbers are terrible and deeply concerning. But they also show us just how important practicing safe internet use is for the well-being of young people in Ireland today. Now, I’m no therapist but I do have some advice on what to do and what might help.

* Do your best to block and report them.
* Let your parent/guardian know. They have your best interests at heart.
* Tell a teacher, they are there to help.
* Get help, the guidance councillors are both trained and so are other members of staff at LCC, they are happy to help.
* Above all else, **TELL SOMEONE**, bullies target people who feel alone. It may be hard but not telling someone is going to make it infinitely worse.

I hope you finish reading this, not scared of the internet, after all it is a great thing. But simply wiser and more cautious of its dangers as it has many.

Thank you for reading I hope you enjoyed!