

# INTERNET SAFETY: PLANNING AND PREVENTION FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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# DISCUSSION TOPICS



Research  
Findings



Risks



Internet  
Safety



Tips to  
keep  
teens safe  
online



Resources  
for teens  
and  
caregivers

# THE INTERNET AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

- Individuals on the Autism Spectrum are just as interested, if not more interested, in the Internet than their peers due to the access to information and as a means for social communication (Autism Speaks, 2011).
- Individuals who have difficulty learning or have a disability are 16% more likely to be *persistently* cyberbullied over a long period of time (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008).
- People with ASDs like computer-based instruction and find it motivating (Moore & Calvert, 2001).
- Parents of children with ASDs say their children are particularly skilled at using computers (Putnam & Chong, 2008).
- Computers reduce the discomfort and anxiety that people with ASDs feel in face-to-face interaction because they can interact in a familiar place (Bagatell, 2010).

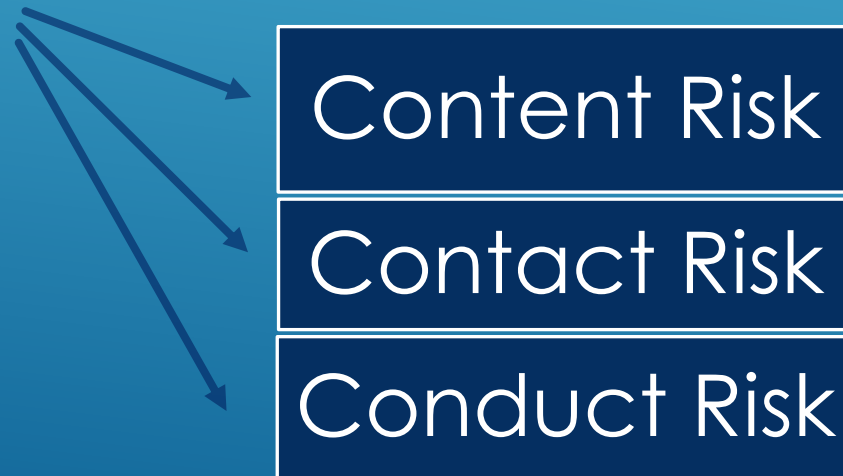
# THE INTERNET AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER CONT'D

- While computers may help to facilitate social communication for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, more time may be spent in **nonsocial** online activities (Mazurek, Shattuck, Wagner, & Cooper, 2012).
- 13.2% of teenagers between the ages of 13-17 diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) use computers to access the internet, email or chat (Mazurek, Shattuck, Wagner, & Cooper, 2012).
- Individuals with ASDs are more likely to develop compulsive Internet usage than individuals without ASDs (Finkenauer et al., 2012).
- People with ASDs report that communication on the computer helps them interact with others (Benford & Standen, 2009).

# WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- Categorizing online risks can be helpful in establishing a framework when considering these increased areas of vulnerabilities for youth with learning, developmental, and mental health issues (Livingstone, Haddon, & Gorzig, 2012).

- These include



# WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- **Fixation on games and or social networking sites (conduct risk):**
  - Set clear limits on internet use and use a timer for the teen to indicate when use is finished. Software timers can also be used to limit access to certain websites to specific hours.
  - Encourage technology or computer use in a main room in the home.
- **Exposure to inappropriate material (content risk):**
  - Talk to your teen about the kind of things it is ok to look at. A basic rule could be 'if I won't let you watch it on television, it's not OK to search for it online.'
  - Ensure your teen knows to come to you or another trusted adult if they see something that upsets them.
- **Predators (contact risk):**
  - Give the teen a checklist of information he/ she should not be giving out online for safety reasons (for example: birthdate, social security number, address, school name).
  - Encourage teens to create an "avatar" or use a nickname.
  - Pay especially close attention to accounts. This is where he is most likely to interact with strangers or fall victim to cyberbullying.

# RISKS CONT'D

- **Pornography (content risk):**

- Prevention starts by blocking pornographic sites and advertisements that may be inappropriate for teens.
- Monitor and be familiar with your teen's Internet use on any devices, not just the main computer. Continue to check in regarding the sites they like, individuals they talk to online, and their general online behavior.

- **Cyberbullying (conduct risk):**

- Always tell a trusted adult about the experience or situation.
- Teach your teen never to respond to the bullying message or inappropriate content, and to never forward it to others.
- Document, print, and save the message.



# INTERNET SAFETY

To teach teens with ASD about internet safety, an acronym called **PLAY IT SAFE** can be helpful (Cerebra.org)

- P** Personal information - don't share it.
- L** Let a trusted adult know - tell someone if anyone asks for your personal information.
- A** Attachments - beware before opening any attachments.
- Y** Your feelings are important - if something happens that makes you uncomfortable, tell an adult right away.
- I** Information - remember that **not** everything you see online is true. If you are unsure ask a trusted adult.
- T** Take breaks from the computer.
- S** Spending money - don't buy things online without permission.
- A** Act politely - don't say anything online that you would not say to someone in person.
- F** Friends online should stay online.
- E** Enjoy yourself.



## Personal information



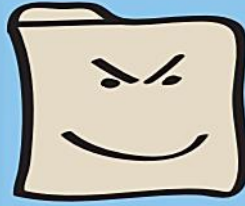
Don't share it.  
Don't tell anyone your full name or where you live or go to school.

## Let a trusted adult know



Let a trusted adult know if someone asks you for personal information.

## Attachments



Ask a trusted adult before opening attachments, bad ones could break your computer.

## Your feelings are important



If something you see online makes you feel upset tell a trusted adult.

## Spending money online



Never buy things without permission. Spending money online should only ever be done by a trusted adult.

## Act politely



Never say anything online you could be told off for at school.

## Friends online should stay online



If someone asks you to meet them or talk to them on the phone you should say NO and tell a trusted adult.

## Enjoy yourself!



Play IT safe and have fun.

## Information



Pigs can fly!

Not everything you see online is true. If you are unsure ask a trusted adult.

## Take regular breaks from the computer



It is important to take breaks to prevent repetitive strain injuries.

Cerebra.org

# WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

- Learn how to manage privacy setting and block inappropriate material on your Internet browsers and the individual websites your child uses.
  - Stay Safe Online <https://staysafeonline.org/stay-safe-online/managing-your-privacy/manage-privacy-settings/>
- Communicate with your child about online bullying and his/ her online activities.
- Use technology together.
- “Friend” your child on social media sites so that you can monitor their activity.
- Look through the Internet browser history regularly to see what your child is doing online.
  - WiKi How to Do Anything <https://www.wikihow.com/View-Browsing-History>
- Help your child set up their accounts online and control access to them by keeping the passwords from your child.
  - Wiki How to Do Anything <https://www.wikihow.tech/Lock-Google-Chrome-with-a-Password>
  - I keep safe <https://www.ikeepsafe.org/parents>

# WHAT CAN PARENTS DO? CONT'D

- Have a curfew for using handheld electronics with Internet access so that your teen turns them in at a certain hour.
- Limit computer and Internet time using visual schedules, timers, etc.
- Model appropriate online behavior in your own use of technology.
- Monitor your credit card for any unauthorized purchases.
- Look up terms and acronyms that your child uses in communications online to know what they mean.
  - NetLingo <http://www.netlingo.com>

# TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

## **Visual Supports**

Provide pictures or reminders of internet safety tips. A checklist of internet do's and don'ts can be effective. Also, consider lists of acceptable websites or reminders to check in with parents or teachers.

## **Behavioral Contract**

Provides teens with more one on one help, support, and intervention and holds them accountable. Provides structure, routine, consistency, and organization while promoting self responsibility, accountability, and buy-in.

## **Social Narratives, Scripts or Social Stories**

Write a description of an internet safety scenario in story form and read it to/with the teen. These can help to reinforce ideas about how to stay safe while using the internet.

## **Role Playing**

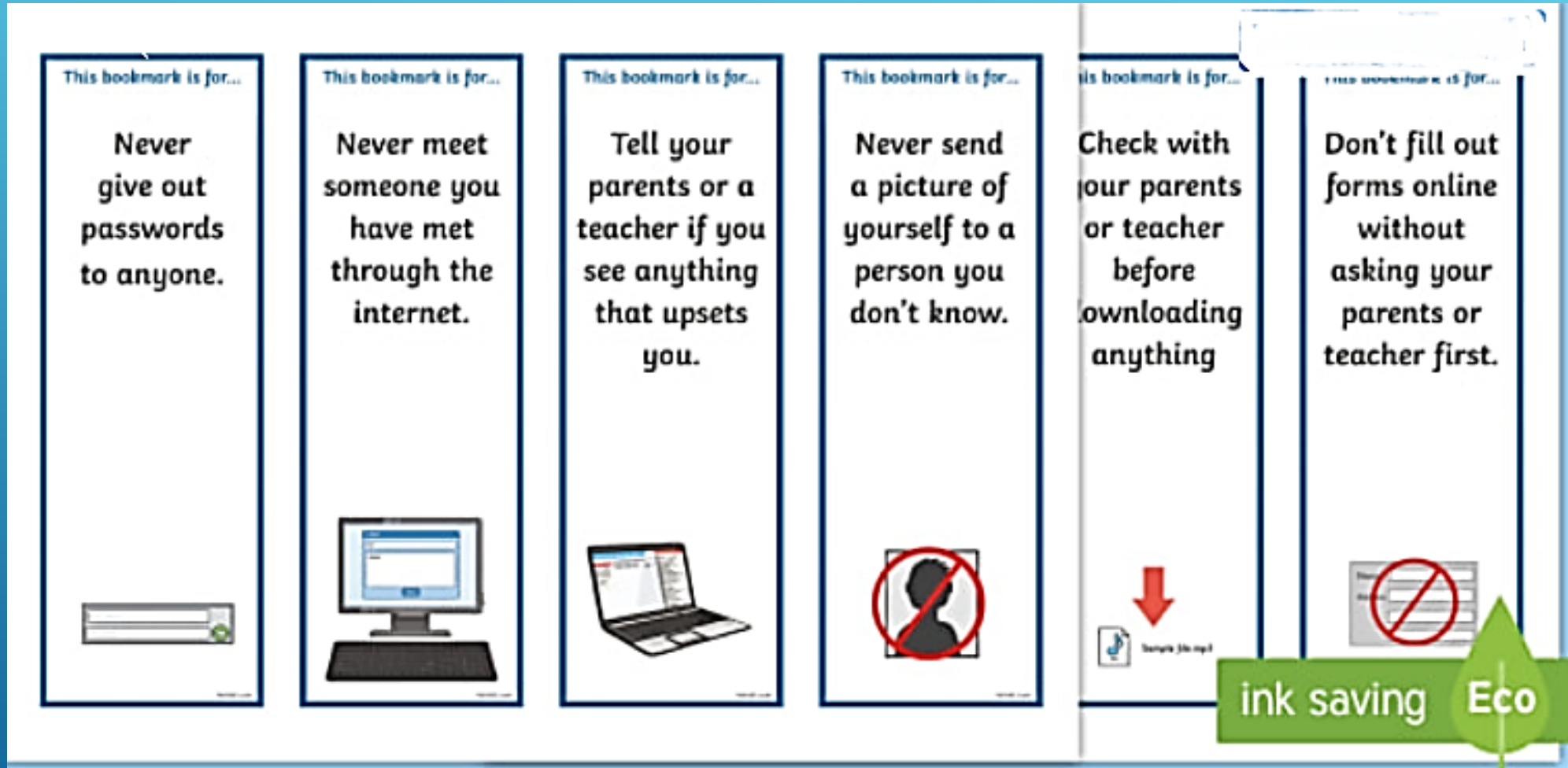
Role play multiple scenarios with the teen about internet safety. Have a conversation with him/her afterwards about why scenarios are safe or unsafe.

## **Behavior Skills Training (BST)**

“Insitu” (in the situation) training is a way of presenting a simulated safety threat in a safe environment and to “catch teens in the act” and to subsequently rehearse the safety skills needed for that simulated dangerous situation.



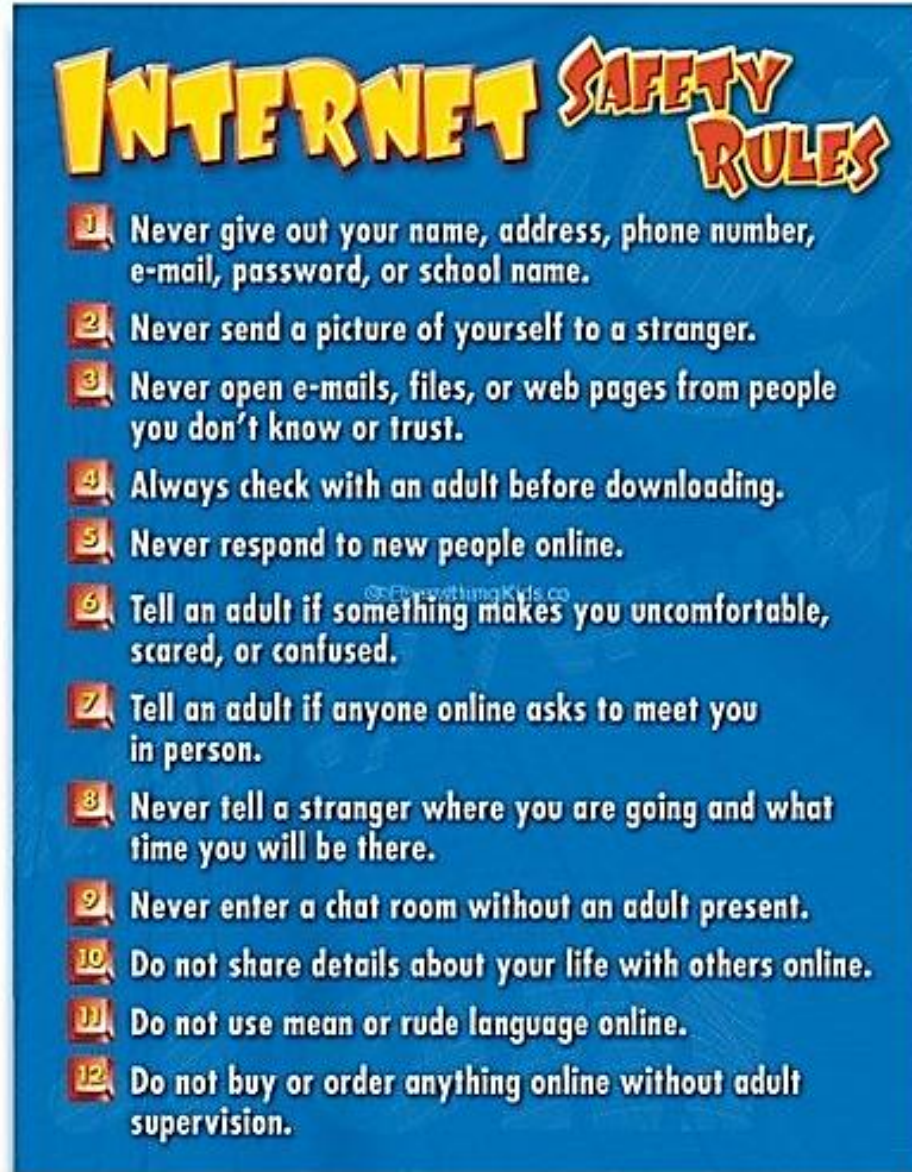
# Visual Supports





## Visual Supports

## Visual Supports





Grades K - 2

My Rules for

Palmer River  
Internet Safety Pledge

## Internet Safety

Primary

The Internet is where I learn and play  
But I have to be careful everyday  
So I pledge to be safer online  
And follow these rules all of the time:



1

I will tell my trusted adult if anything makes me feel sad, scared, or confused.

2

I will ask my trusted adult before sharing information like my name, address, and phone number.

3

I won't meet face-to-face with anyone from the Internet.

4

I will always use good netiquette and not be rude or mean online.

Student Signs Here



signed .....

signed .....

Parent Signs Here

Room #:

Please discuss  
with your child  
the rules for  
using the  
computer and  
internet at home.  
Sign and then  
return to school.

**NetSmartz Workshop**  
A PROGRAM OF THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Watch videos and play games at [NetSmartzKids.org](http://NetSmartzKids.org)  
Copyright © 2010 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved. Animated Characters.  
Copyright © 2000-2010 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. All rights reserved.

# Behavioral Contract

# Social Script

## Online Safety

Follow the SMART rules to help stay safe online.

Safe

S

Stay **safe** online by not sharing your personal information.



Meet

M

Do not **meet** anyone who you have only become friends with online.



Accept

A

Do not **accept** messages and friend requests from people you do not know.



Reliable

R

Not everything online is **reliable**. People online are strangers and you can't always trust everything they say.



Tell

T

**Tell** an adult you trust if anything happens online that you do not like.



Be careful what you share online!  
Stop and think before you share information online.  
Don't say or do anything that you wouldn't do in the real world!



## Social Networking Safety



The Internet can be a great place.

I can find information, have fun, and connect with friends.

There are a lot of people on the Internet that I do not know.

These people are called strangers.

Not all strangers are friendly. Some strangers may want to hurt me.

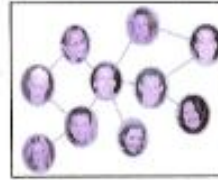
To be safe, I will follow some basic guidelines

1. I keep all of my personal information private.  
This means I do not post my picture or give away my address, phone number, or the name of my town or school.
2. I never meet with online strangers in person.  
If someone asks me to meet in person, I will talk to an adult before I do anything.
3. If someone sends me an email, picture, or message that makes me feel uncomfortable I will tell an adult right away.
4. I will avoid posting pictures, jokes, and other materials that could be thought of as sexual.

I do not want any one to hurt me. That is why I will use the Internet safely.

It is an important part of my life.

I will always remember to stay safe when I am having fun using the internet.



# Social Story

<https://socialsafety.wordpress.com/stranger-danger/educationalopportunities/>

# Role Playing

## Scenario 1:

Your friend has been talking to someone online. He/She tells you they're going to meet up tomorrow.



## Scenario 2:

A friend has sent you a mean message through the school email.



## Scenario 3:

You've been playing an online game and someone you don't know asks to be your friend.



## Scenario 4:

You notice a rude picture has been uploaded to a website you use.



## Scenario 5:

Your friend has sent you an email with an attachment of a rude picture.



## Scenario 6:

You keep lying to your mum about going onto a social networking site because you know she doesn't like you doing it.



## Scenario 7:

You're getting mean text messages from someone you don't know.



## Scenario 8:

You look at a classmate's profile on Facebook. You aren't Facebook friends but you can see all her details.



## Scenario 9:

Your friends are saying that if you don't join their What's App group you fancy your teacher.



## Scenario 10:

You have sent a picture of yourself to your friend and they've now put it on Facebook. You want to get it taken off.





**Scenario 11:**

You notice your friend has a picture of him/her in their school uniform on their profile picture on Facebook and has also shared their telephone number.

**Scenario 12:**

Your friend keeps emailing/messaging you every time you are online and its getting really annoying.

**Scenario 13:**

You have a Facebook account and you're under 13. You don't want it anymore.

**Scenario 14:**

You can't stop playing computer games until really late every night.

**Scenario 15:**

You told your friend your password and now they've used your account to send mean messages.

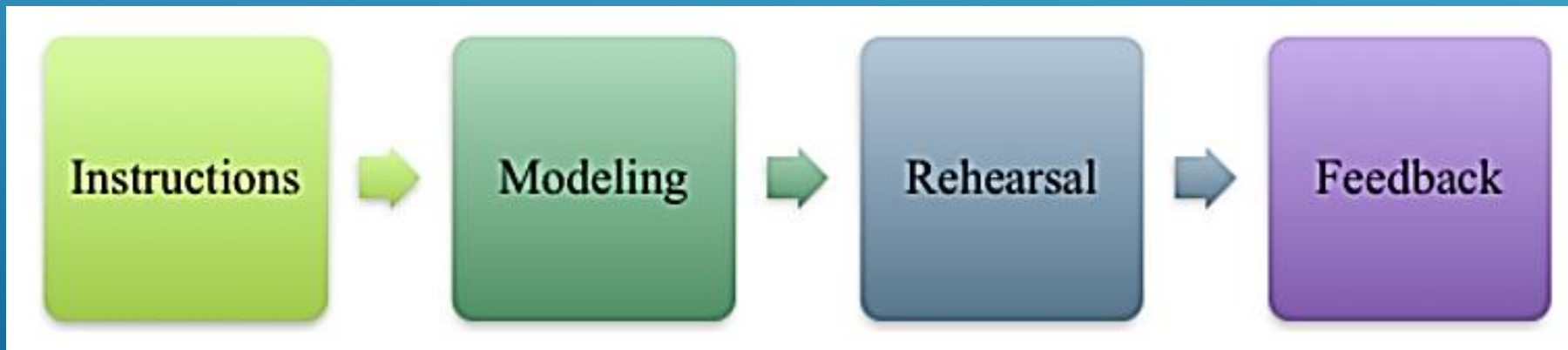


## E-Safety Scenario Cards

Created by: Katrina Morris

# BEHAVIOR SKILLS TRAINING

- Many teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder need to be explicitly taught each and every step of a particular skill.
- Skills must first be identified, defined and broken into small teachable steps, and taught directly, if skills are to be acquired.
- Behavioral skills training is an active teaching approach that is comprised of:



Miltenberger, 2008

# SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH ASD:

- **WeAreAutism.org** - Share, talk, and communicate in a user-led social network for individuals, family members and those members of the community. Share the wealth of your experience and plan for the future with similar individuals. Find others with similar interests and goals.
- **WrongPlanet.net** - Wrong Planet is a web community designed for individuals (and parents / professionals of those) with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, PDDs, and other neurological differences. They provide a discussion forum, where members communicate with each other, an article section, with exclusive articles and how-to guides, a blogging feature, and a chat room for real-time communication with other "Aspies".
- **AutismSpeaks.Ning.org** - Autism Speaks Social Networking Site. This online community was created as a support forum for those affected by autism.
- **Specialfriends.com** – Social networking site for individuals with learning/ intellectual disabilities and their caregivers (6,000 members from across 55 countries). Must be 13 to join.



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# Social Safety

An Online Social Networking Guide for Parents and Teachers of Young Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

<https://socialsafety.wordpress.com/cyberbullying/>

## Internet and Social Media Safety

- <http://kids.usa.gov/teachers/lesson-plans/online-safety/index.shtml> has functional lesson plans, interesting interactive games on safety and age appropriate real life stories.
- Practice answering the phone and not giving out pertinent information or credit card information



Netsmartz Workshop  
[www.netsmartz.org/Parents](http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents)

Safe  
**INTERNET**  
**SURFING**  
SafeSurfingKids.com



# IN CLOSING

- Social media safety skills are the skills necessary to maintain one's safety while navigating through a social media platform.
- As social media use increases, it is critical that the most vulnerable populations be taught general safety skills intended to prevent exploitation.
- Safety skills must be acquired, maintained and generalized.
- Planning and prevention are ways caregivers can assist in protecting their child from internet safety risks and support their child in learning the skills necessary to stay safe while online.



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- *Perfect Targets: Asperger Syndrome and Bullying—Practical Solutions for Surviving the social World* is a book by Rebekah Heinrichs: [http://www.aapcpublishing.net/Product\\_Description/tabid/144/ProductID/135/Default.aspx](http://www.aapcpublishing.net/Product_Description/tabid/144/ProductID/135/Default.aspx)