



## **“My Space” Parenting, Technology and Adolescents**

At Parent Line we hear many stories of parents of adolescents, who feel they have been forced into an alien technological world. Children keep in contact with people on social networking sites, twitter and texting. They play on line games with people all around the world and have on line relationships with people they don't know.

Most parents are not comfortable or familiar with the technological world that their children live in. Children often have more skills and knowledge about technology than parents. This can create anxiety and fear in parents. Parent Line counsellors often discuss with parents, their concerns about what their children are doing on line.

Nearly 50% of Australian children access the internet after school and use it 2 – 6 days a week and 25% use it every day. On average children spend 7.9 hours per fortnight playing online games. (NSW Govt Factsheet “Game over! Knowing when to stop”, 2009)

So how can parents influence what their adolescent children are doing on line?

1. Educate yourself about their on line activity. Join one of the social networking sites and see what really happens (it's might not be as scary as you think!), learn about the games they play, talk to others about technology. Be curious and interested when you talk to your children about technology and how what it means in their lives.
2. Try to have the computer in a public space so that there is a transparency about their on line activity.
3. Discuss the issues that concern you in a real way. Instead of being critical of technology, discuss what is concerning you about it (e.g. their safety, lack of sleep etc)
4. Keep track of how your child is going in other areas of their life (school, interests, friends (not on line!), routines – e.g. eating, sleeping etc) and make an assessment about whether their on line activity is impacting these areas.
5. If you are concerned or think that your child might be addicted to on line activity, contact a professional for help.

For the cost of a local call, Parent Line's professional counsellors are available 24 hours a day to talk through any of your parenting concerns on 1300 1300 52 or visit our website [www.parentline.org.au](http://www.parentline.org.au)