Case study: Jeremy's friend—Grooming and luring

Theme

People can be lured into relationships and groomed for future abuse through their use of mobile and internet technologies.

Key learning/subject areas

Cross curricula.

Duration

One to two periods.

Objectives

On completion of this activity students will be able to:

- recognise some of the techniques used by online predators to groom and lure others
- identify the dangers of meeting online friends and recognise the need to meet them with a supervising adult present
- apply strategies to protect themselves from online predators.

The output will be:

- a set of safety guidelines for younger students related to the issue of grooming.

Resources/links/materials required

CyberNetrix CD-ROM

Object in the room	Activity
TV	Jeremy's friend
Helmet	Staying cybersafe
Mobile phone	What's grooming? Glossary
Laptop	Chatting smart Chat smart information Glossary
Phone	Who're you going to call?

Material required at school

- Case study activity handout.
- Case study transcript handout.

Additional resources

Two useful information sheets called 'Safety tips for kids and teenagers' and 'Paedophiles and online grooming' are available at www.netalert.gov.au.

Introduction

The focus of this case study is grooming and luring on the internet and mobile phones. Students can undertake this activity by reading the handout and case study transcript, or in conjunction with viewing the video on the CyberNetrix CD-ROM.

Prior learning

Students need to have knowledge of safety issues and possible actions in response to different situations when using the internet and mobile technologies. Students also need an understanding of chat rooms and how to protect their personal information in an online environment.

Activity description

1.   Small groups/whole class activity

Introduce the topic by asking the students if they know what the terms 'grooming' and 'luring' mean. It may be decided to deal with this sensitive topic by breaking the class into smaller groups of three to four rather than conduct a whole class discussion. The groups could then share their thoughts.

As a class, students can discuss the following:

•   Can you ever really tell if someone online is who they say they are?

•   Online predators sometimes try to pose as other children/teenagers. How might they do this?

•   What can you do if someone makes you feel uncomfortable online?

Students can view or read 'Jeremy's friend' and engage in discussion using the handout.

2.   Pair/small group or whole class activity

The internet, especially activities like online games and social networking, allows us to meet people from all over the world, which can be very exciting. However people online can easily hide their true identity and their motive might be to harm others.

Ask students to consider what online safety guidelines they would provide for people their age and younger. Draw up a list.

This activity could be developed by the whole class or students could be divided into pairs or small groups. To make sure that the guidelines are comprehensive, they need to cover:

- protecting personal details online, such as full name, address, age, mobile number and email address, and anything that might locate a student, such as school or sporting club—this should extend to photos, which can enable identification

- avoiding using online account names that are 'flirty' because these may attract unwanted attention

- how to report any contact where a person asks personal or uncomfortable questions

- tips on how to handle unwanted contact

- conduct for communication with online friends in open forums—not agreeing to communicate in private

- never agreeing to meet an online friend offline, without the permission and guidance of a responsible adult, who should attend any planned meetings, preferably in a public place

- that if a child is in immediate danger—or appears to have been the subject of grooming—the police should be contacted on 000.

Teacher notes

This is a confronting case study which examines the issues of how difficult it is to establish someone's true identity online. ACMA advises that children should never meet an online friend without a responsible adult present and that these meetings should be in a public place.

This subject may be sensitive for some students, particularly if they have already been subjected to grooming or luring. It may be advisable to contact the school's welfare coordinator before beginning the activity if it is believed the case study might upset some students. The additional resources section lists websites and videos to which students can be referred.

Handout

Case study: Jeremy's friend—Grooming and luring

Individually or with a partner, watch the case study video or read the case study transcript and then answer the questions below. Be prepared to talk through the answers with the rest of the class.

1. The internet can be used for anything, from doing research for a school assignment to playing online games with other people.

   What do you use the internet for? List the benefits.

2. But the dangers to young people are just as real online. And at the end of the day it's impossible to really know who you might be talking to.

   What do you think this means? What insight does it give you into the safety issues that face you online?

Optional questions

3. List the danger signs that Jeremy didn't pick up, but that we later learn are the things that were not quite right in his online friend's story.

4. What lessons can be learned from Jeremy's story? Discuss.

5. Identify what you would do differently when using technology as a result of reading or watching this case study.

Handout

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Transcript

'During Term 3 last year, I was pretty unhappy at school. I don't know, it was just a bad time for me. I didn't do as well as usual with my schoolwork and playing online games with other people made me feel good. It was a way to escape all the crap going on in my life.

Most games allow you to send messages to other players, and sometimes you'll start a private chat with other players to discuss cheats, tips, strategies, you know that kind of stuff.

I got to know this guy who was pretty much obsessed with RuneScape like me. He lived in a different city but we became mates and we'd meet in private chat rooms quite regularly, because I told him how I was a bit depressed about stuff. It just felt nice having someone who knew how I felt and respected how I felt about school and how the kids were giving me a hard time.

We got to know each other pretty well and we exchanged mobile numbers and email addresses. So when Mum and Dad would kick me off the computer or make me go to bed, I could still text him. He started to ask me some really personal things and, to be honest, I didn't think it was that strange because we'd become such good mates. I guess it just felt nice having someone who knew how I was feeling.

When the school holidays started, he suggested we should finally meet. He asked his Mum if I could stay over and she said it was fine and that she would buy the plane ticket. His parents seemed so cool compared to mine.

I packed an overnight bag and went to the airport without telling my parents. When I got off the plane at the other end, he texted me to say we should meet at this hotel instead. I didn't even stop to think it was weird, but I should've.

Luckily I never made it to the hotel because I was intercepted by the police. My parents had worked out what had happened and had called them straightaway. It turned out that my friend, who I thought was the same age as me, was actually a 40-year-old man.

I should never have assumed that this guy was who he said he was, and I should have been more careful about how much personal information I gave about myself. You wouldn't tell a stranger in the street that sort of stuff, so telling someone online is no different.'