T.M.I. The Dangers of Oversharing

We have never met, but a quick Google search will tell you everything about me. You can find my family picture on Facebook, you can learn where I work, where I go to school and what movie I saw last. You can see my dance moves on YouTube, learn my favorite music from Grooveshark, read my journal on my blog and see my best friends on Flickr. Social media encourages people to share anything and everything with the world around them. Blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other networks, allows users to talk about themselves, their relationships and activities. These sites generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue based on activity, so they encourage users to share as much as possible, as often as possible. Of course, there are privacy settings on all social sites, but these settings are never the default and only a tiny minority of users makes the effort to opt out. Everyone else shares openly (and often unknowingly) with the world. Oversharing is becoming an epidemic. In 2010, Consumer Reports released its annual "State of the Net" report, and found that over half (52%) of social network users post risky information online. This includes sharing full birthday, address, phone numbers and location. With regards to Facebook and Twitter, two of the top social networks, the percentage of those sharing risky information was even higher, at 56%. Teenagers in particular use Facebook as a way to communicate with friends, but may have no idea about how much they're publicly sharing to the world. Teens thrive on social activity, popularity and trends, and to them, the consequences of oversharing are of no concern. Just last month, Trey Pennington, a well-known social media personality, blogger and online radio show host was found dead after committing suicide in a church parking lot. Pennington had over 111,464 followers on Twitter and his personal struggles over the last few months were very public.   While social networking was not blamed for Pennington's death, there is no doubt that the oversharing of his personal struggles heightened his tragic situation and caused additional grief for his family. There are several other examples of people who have shared personal information on social networks and suffered the consequences including government employees who have been laid off due to Facebook activity, divorces caused by online relationships and countless reputations put in jeopardy. Fortunately, oversharing is almost entirely preventable. What you share on your social networks is a personal choice. It is (or should be) common-sense to think before you share, rather than share reactively. Teaching teens the skill of responsible sharing can be a battle, but asking the following questions (or posting them near your home computer) might help teens think twice before sharing:

1. Does everybody really want to know this?
2. Is it helpful? Relevant?
3. Are there any tradeoffs or potential risks from sharing it with the entire world?
4. Is there anyone I wouldn't want to see this?

Set strict limits and do not allow your teens to post personal information, hate messages, vacation dates, family arguments, financial struggles, personal information online. In addition, be sure your teens stay away from social media at particularly emotional times. When someone is feeling angry or sad, it might be a good idea to avoid saying anything until you have a better state of mind. Monitor what they are posting on social sites and consider putting an age limit on personal blogs. Blogs are easily found through search engines and have no privacy settings other

than self-control. Anything on a blog can be viewed by the world. If your teen has already posted too much, be sure their social media accounts are deleted, (not just logged off) and delete all blog domains permanently. It can be an unpleasant surprise when you realize what seemed like a good post to share a few hours before might not be such a good post anymore.

http://sociallyactive.com/t-m-i-the-dangers-of-oversharing/