

SAFETY AND OUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Clinical psychologist **Dr. Norman Blumenthal**, spoke to Middle School students and their parents about how to protect against predators, keep personal information private and prevent online bullying.

As Dr. Blumenthal explained, the purpose of the presentation was to teach a set of safety rules so that students would know exactly how to act if something felt wrong while they were online.

Important points addressed to **Students:**

Trust your gut: children should pay attention to their sense that something feels wrong

A predator will test you, talk about ordinary things, before talking about unrelated, often inappropriate topics. This is a Red Flag

Beware of ‘catfishing’: a term that is defined as when someone pretends he or she is not who he or she really is. A boy or girl, or groups of girls or boys pretending to be someone they are not.

Never agree to meet someone in person, whom you know only online, without your parents’ consent.

If someone you don’t know in person asks you to share a photo of yourself or one of your passwords, **Do Not Share.** This is a Red Flag.

When you encounter a Red Flag, **tell a parent or adult at school.** You will not get into trouble even if the online predator tells you that you will.

Important points addressed to **Parents:**

Children are most at risk for an error in judgement online:

When they are doing something exciting with a group of peers.

When they are going through a rough time personally or socially

When they are craving the attention and affection of others

Remind your child periodically about on-line safety in a calm and concerned way.

Employ **monitoring devices** for your child and yourselves that alert others to potentially hazardous communications or compromising behaviors.

Keep in mind the goal of enjoying the numerous benefits of the internet in a manner that assures **safety.**