Many of you have likely subscribed to this e-newsletter because you are passionate about making the online environment safer for children and young people. Whilst the majority of our efforts are geared around equipping young people with the digital literacy and critical thinking skills to navigate the online environment responsibly, we must also look at our own practices and how they are impacting on young people.

Behaviour which is conducted over the internet and mobile phones is very likely to be the same behaviour which children are displaying in their offline activities also, so we can’t use our unfamiliarity with the technology as an excuse for not being positive role models. We need to look at the behaviours we are modelling to our young people, both related and unrelated to technology, so that they have a reference point for their own actions.

**Mobile Phones**

In a recent study by Pew Internet, it was revealed that 47% of adults in the US who text, also do so whilst driving and 75% of adults with mobile phones have made a voice call whilst driving. What sort of message does this send to our youth who are likely to be the passengers in these vehicles whilst a parent or older sibling irresponsibly (and illegally) uses a mobile device?

**Sexting**

What are our own habits relating to pornography, what do we discuss as “sexy” and how do we define gender-roles? If pornography is freely available in the home, children and young people may access and view this material which can have a variety of impacts.

If we look at the media consumption of young people, they are hearing conflicting messages about sexting and what is appropriate in a teenage relationship. For example, here are some lyrics from recent songs likely to be on a young person’s playlist:

“Take a dirty picture. Just send the dirty picture to me.”
Dirty Picture by Taio Cruz ft. Ke$h

“Can you send a nasty pic so I can see right where it is and I promise I won’t show my friends (yeah right)”
Sexting by Ludacris

“Hit me wit a text. Let me know your home alone freaky wit that camera phone.”
Text by Mann ft Jason Derulo

If, as parents, carers and teachers we are supporting these messages or not providing an alternative, young people may consider these behaviours as normal and acceptable.

**Cyberbullying**

Bullying is an issue which is facing all demographics of the population. According to the US Workplace Bullying Institute, almost one in six Australian are likely to experience bullying in the workplace. If adults are incapable of handling with workplace bullying, how can children and young people be confident of their ability to deal with cyber-bullying?

If you have experienced bullying in your workplace, you need to model the appropriate response to the young people in your care. This will vary depending on the policies of your workplace but will involve working towards a safe and respectful workplace.

If you have been involved in the bullying of someone in your workplace, you may need to talk to someone about the underlying issues which have resulted in you behaving this way. This will also model to young people that it is OK to seek help and ask for assistance, even if you are who people might consider the “bad guy”.

**Security**

What steps do we take to protect our accounts and devices from viruses and malware? If we take the “it will never happen to me” approach, we are setting not only ourselves but the young people in our care up for failure. We need to take an active role in protecting the security and integrity of our accounts and devices and encourage children and young people to do likewise.

This e-newsletter has, hopefully, made you think about your own attitudes and behaviours and has probably raised more questions than it has answered. This is not a bad thing! We need to realise that the actions of young people online are symptomatic of their offline experiences and environment and that we need to focus our efforts on a more broader approach of respect, ethics and citizenship, rather than narrow concepts of online safety.