The theme of Safer Internet Day 2013 is “Online Rights and Responsibilities” and users around the world are encouraged to “Connect with respect”. So what does respect look like in a digital environment where we may be communicating with inanimate programs (do we respect things that aren’t alive?) or with people that we don’t know or who don’t know us (is respect only important when it is visible?)? I would argue that respect needs to be shown in all our actions as not only do they reflect on us, but affect how others show us respect.

Respecting privacy

There is no doubt that our concept of privacy is continually evolving and it may seem as though much of what we used to call private, is acted out in public. Private conversations between lovers are conducted over mobile phones in crowded buses and trains, personal journals are published online for the world to see and people place stickers representing their family members and pets on their cars for other road users to see. We still, however, make the decision about what personal information we share about ourselves and others, and with whom we share it.

It is more difficult to control what personal information others share about us, but there are a few steps we can take to protect ourselves:

- Read the privacy policy – every website, program, app and subscription you use will have a privacy policy outlining what information will be collected, how it will be stored, what it will be used for and if it will be shared. These policies will also indicate the privacy options you have at your disposal and it is important to use these privacy settings. If you aren’t happy with the privacy policy, you can lobby for change or take your business elsewhere.
- Think carefully about whom you provide access to – only people you know and trust should be given access to your personal information. This means only adding as friends, contacts or buddies, people that you believe will respect your privacy.
- Search yourself online – if you want to see how much personal information is available online about you, search your name in search engines such as Bing, Google and Pip.

Respecting reputations

We’ll all have a variety of different relationships throughout our lives: good relationships, bad relationships, short relationships and long relationships. One thing which should remain constant, is respect. It is a difficult thing to show respect to someone we don’t like, especially when we hide behind technology. An often cited disinhibitor to cyberbullying is the perceived anonymity provided by technology and the idea of “getting away with it.” We need to reinforce the importance of making ethical decisions when no one is watching us!

game. When connecting with others using technology, before you say or do something, consider:

- Would I like it done to me?
- What sort of an environment am I creating?
- How would I feel if everyone knew it was me?

Respect in relationships can take a variety of forms: not sharing personal photos or information outside of the relationship, refraining from posting something hateful about someone who’s just posted something hateful about you, or treating all players as equals in an online

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Reputations are shaped by many factors – our actions, what people say about us, popular culture and who we associate with. It can be easy to assume that respecting reputation means conforming to traditional roles and stereotypes when it is really about making sure that our words and actions convey us to the world in a way that we are happy with. It means sharing our genuine selves with the people we want in the way that we want. The trick is making sure we share things we want to be seen in the long term, not just sharing things we want to right now.

So how do we do this? Think before you post. Take two seconds to consider what it is you are doing before you do it, as once it is out there it can be almost impossible to take it back. Some things to consider include:

- Would I want my grandmother to see it?
- What would happen if this came up in a job interview?
- How would my future children react to it?

Respecting reputations is also about considering how our words and action impact on the reputations of others. As discussed in the respecting relationships section, we need to think very carefully about how we treat others and how we affect others’ opinions of them. Gossip and rumours can do serious damage to a person’s reputation that takes much longer to repair than it did to harm.