'''Teen Online Dating''' is a way for teens to form relationships with others via the internet. [[Online dating]] became popular beginning in the early 2000's. As a result, finding dates, love, and relationships online became an alternative to the traditional way of [[dating]]. Creators of dating websites initially intended for it to be for those 18 and above. While there are few to none dating websites solely for teenagers, many [[social networking]] sites have become a form of online dating. Teens have began to create relationships via the internet with people they do not personally know and this can lead into a romantic relationship between two young strangers.

==History==

With social networking websites such as [[MySpace]] and [[facebook]] along with many online [[chat rooms]] specified for teens, having an online profile quickly became popular and accepted starting in the early 2000's. These websites were created for teens to communicate with their friends and people all over the nation and the world. Chat rooms, with their easy access, began to have rooms set just for teens to communicate with other teens in the online world. As more and more teens began to use these websites, forming relationships with other teens happened naturally. Starting out by talking to another person, exchanging more information, forming a friendship and then possibly ending up with meeting in person and starting a more serious relationship was the common course for teens in the online world.

==Safety==

While majority of social websites encourage its members or guest users to not disclose personal information, there is no way to guarantee the user will follow this suggestion. Owners, founders, and administrators of these websites may choose to monitor the activity on their website and encourage others to do the same to ensure the safety and well-being of those that access the website. Every user has the option to share as much information or as little information about themselves as they would like. The best way to ensure a users safety is to not share any personal information. Many adults that

play an important role in a teenager's life do not support teens meeting people from the internet or exchanging personal information. This is to protect the teenager.

==Warnings==

Many psychologists, police officers, and other people with background knowledge in teens online are very against teens meeting people from the internet and having any type of relationship. The warnings against this come from the fact that the internet user does not know who they are talking to. The user only knows what the other user is telling them which may or may not be true. There have been many cases where young teens meet someone from the internet who they believed to be another teen but in reality was an adult. There has been a significant amount of detective work to crack down on adults trying to meet teens from online websites. The television program [[To Catch A Predator]] shows the extreme cases of when adults try to meet teens from the internet to have an illegal, [[sexual relationship]].

Because teenagers are not fully developed in the brain, they are unable to make logical decisions at all times. Some websites have begun to require [[parental consent]] for users to join a website if they are below the age of 18. This is done in hope to inform the parent of what is going on and what could go on. While most of the time there is no way to tell if the parent did consent, it is a step to warn the teen about what may happen while on the website and after they have logged off.

==Cultural View==

As a society and culture teenagers finding love, dates, or relationships on the internet is still not fully approved. With many parents, teachers, leaders and other adults who are part of a teen's life are opposed to teens finding love online, it is looked down upon socially as well. In an article written by Michele Fleming and Debra Rickwood <ref>{{cite journal|last=Fleming|first=Michele|coauthors=Debra

Rickwood|title=Teens in Cyberspace|journal=Youth Studies Australia|year=2004|volume=23|issue=3|pages=46-52|url=<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&hid=17&sid=1ad866f5-8d4c-4b10-945f-0ab4b3efc8f4%40sessionmgr11>.|accessdate=April 1, 2012}}</ref> they inform about the concern that parents have of their teens and the internet. Adults in America and many countries around the world, including Australia where this article was published, are worried about the amount of time teens spend on the internet and what they are doing while on the internet.

Over the past decade online dating has become more acceptable culturally. There was a time when admitting that you were on a dating site or you met your significant other online was considered an embarrassment. Now it is more common and even encouraged to those that have not had success with the traditional way of dating<ref>{{cite journal|last=Tang|first=Lijun|title=Development of Online Friendship in Different Social Space|journal=Information, Communication & Society|year=2010|volume=13|issue=4|pages=615-633|url=<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=8&hid=17&sid=1ad866f5-8d4c-4b10-945f-0ab4b3efc8f4%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=aph&AN=513 77231>.|accessdate=22 February 2012}}</ref> . While online dating has become more part of the culture, teens finding relationships online is still not considered culturally acceptable. The many cases of relationships that began online and ended in tragedy have been publicized so much by the media that more adults are weary and not in support of teens and online relationships.

==Benefits==

There are many benefits to online dating. The user is able to form some type of relationship or opinion about the person they could potentially date before meeting them. In most cases, the user talks with the user they are interested in via email, chat, phone, webcam or [[sms]] before actually meeting in

person. This is so that they can get to know one another before making plans to meet and eventually date. The user is able to decide if they are interested in the person before devoting the time, energy and resources that are required in dating.

With an online dating profile, the user is able to write a little bit about them. This information includes information that one would typically discover after a date or two in a more traditional form of dating. The user is able to avoid the [[small talk]] that usually takes place during a first date because all of the information is included in the profile. The user is able to find out [[political views]], [[religious belief]], education level, career and more all from reading another users profile. Most websites that are targeted towards dating require a photo to be included in the profile. This was set to make sure that the user knows who they are communicating with and that they are who they say they are. The photo attached to the profile is not always a guarantee however. Many users have reported that other users have used photos from many years' prior, edited photos, or a photo of someone entirely different.

The ease that comes with online dating is something that many seek after. There is less stress, pressure and drama involved typically with an online relationship. The user is able to think out what to say in a response with the ability of editing before sending to the other user. The lower amount of pressure involved in an online relationship is considered very beneficial to those taking part in the relationship.

==Scams and Legitimacy==

There have been many websites shut down or avoided because of the reputation that follows the site. Some sites require a payment, either monthly, annually, or based on how often you use the site. Most sites that require a payment upon usage attach some type of guarantee with their services. If the website pairs the user with another user that based on information provided, they believe will be a

match, a guarantee of love, happiness, or a relationship comes with it. Websites that require credit-card information but do not disclose the amount, terms or purpose of payment are known for being scams. These sites are illegal and only provide harm, not love and happiness.

Not knowing whom one may be talking to is a risk that many people are willing take while trying to find a relationship via the internet. In an article published in the Computers and Human Behavior journal<ref>{{cite journal|last=Guadagno|first=Rosanna|coauthors=Bradley M. Okdie, Sara A. Cruse|title=Dating Deception: Gender, Online Dating, and Exaggerated Self-presentation|journal=Computers in Human Behavior|year=2012|volume=28|issue=2|pages=642-647|url=<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=17&sid=1ad866f5-8d4c-4b10-945f-0ab4b3efc8f4%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=aph&AN=70260534>.|accessdate=19 March 2012}}</ref> , it informs the reader of exaggerations, lies and deception that can often times be found on the internet. Users may upload photos of themselves that is not recent or does not show how they really look or in some cases photos of another person who they are claiming to be. Exaggerating qualities, interests and success is another common occurrence on the internet that gives websites and its users less legitimacy.

==Relationships==

There are many different types of relationships that can be formed online. These relationships vary from pen pals, staying in contact with people you no longer see, dating and long-distance romantic relationships<ref>{{cite journal|last=Poley|first=Meredith|coauthors=Shanhong Luo|title=Social Compensation or Rich-get-richer? The Role of Social Competence in College Students' Use of the Internet to Find a Partner|journal=Computers in Human Behavior|year=2012|volume=28|issue=2|pages=414-419|url=<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=17&sid=1ad866f5-8d4c-4b10-945f-

0ab4b3efc8f4%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSSzzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=aph&AN=702 60509>.|accessdate=19 March 2012}}</ref> . Any type of relationship that is being sought after can be found and formed on the internet. There are websites that are created to help people start communicating with someone from a different culture or country, websites that are meant to reunite lost friends or peers, and websites for help people meet others in their community or field of work or interests<ref>{{cite journal|last=Spreecher|first=Susan|title=Relationship Initiation and Formation on the Internet|journal=Marriage & Family|year=2009|volume=45|issue=6-8|pages=761-782|url=<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=8&hid=17&sid=1ad866f5-8d4c-4b10-945f-0ab4b3efc8f4%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSSzzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=aph&AN=447 47187>.|accessdate=22 February 2012}}</ref> . With hundreds of websites created to meet your wants in a relationship, the need to meet and start a relationship the traditional way is becoming less common in forming relationships.