Safer Internet Day: *Together for a Better Internet*

February 6, 2024

Children, often oblivious to online dangers, may perceive online interactions as harmless. Sex traffickers use various tactics to lure children online, taking advantage of their vulnerability and naivety. Therefore, it is crucial to educate them about internet risks and safety, especially on Safer Internet Day.

Sex trafficking is a heinous crime that affects millions of people not only worldwide but in every community. Unfortunately, children are often the targets. In today's digital age, the internet has become a breeding ground for sex traffickers to lure vulnerable children. Traffickers use various tactics to manipulate and exploit children, and with the ever-increasing use of technology, it has become easier for them to reach their victims.

Social media is one of the most common ways that sex traffickers lure kids online. They create fake profiles and pretend to be someone the child either knows or trusts, or gains their trust by building a relationship with them. They may pose as other players or even game moderators in online gaming platforms. Once the relationship is established, trafficker use this relationship and what they know about the child's vulnerabilities to manipulate the child into meeting them in person, or in having the child share inappropriate sexualized content.

Another tactic used by sex traffickers is through online advertisements. They may post fake job opportunities or promise a better life to vulnerable children. These advertisements can be found on various websites, including social media, job search engines, and even dating websites. Once the child responds to the ad, the traffickers use this as an opportunity to build a relationship and subsequently manipulate and/or coerce the child into compliance.

Safer Internet Day serves as a reminder to all of us to be vigilant, promote online safety and take action to protect our children from falling victim to these predators. By working together and implementing stricter measures, we can create a safer online environment for our children.

For educational tools for children, youth, and teens visit the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's NetSmartz. See Safer Internet Day 2024 for tools for parents and families.