

Educate kids on network pitfalls

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

A couple of months ago, a prominent city school sent a notice to parents of its students of Class 1 to Class 10 to immediately close their Facebook accounts. The school cited lack of parental supervision when children are on the social networking site, number of hours lost each day on facebooking, very abusive language, bullying, making highly disparaging remarks about teaching faculty and comments/confessions with the intention to embarrass or hurt classmates as some reasons for the notice.

With regard to use of social networking sites, teens have always been under the scanner. Frequent incidents of children falling prey in cyberspace prove their vulnerability.

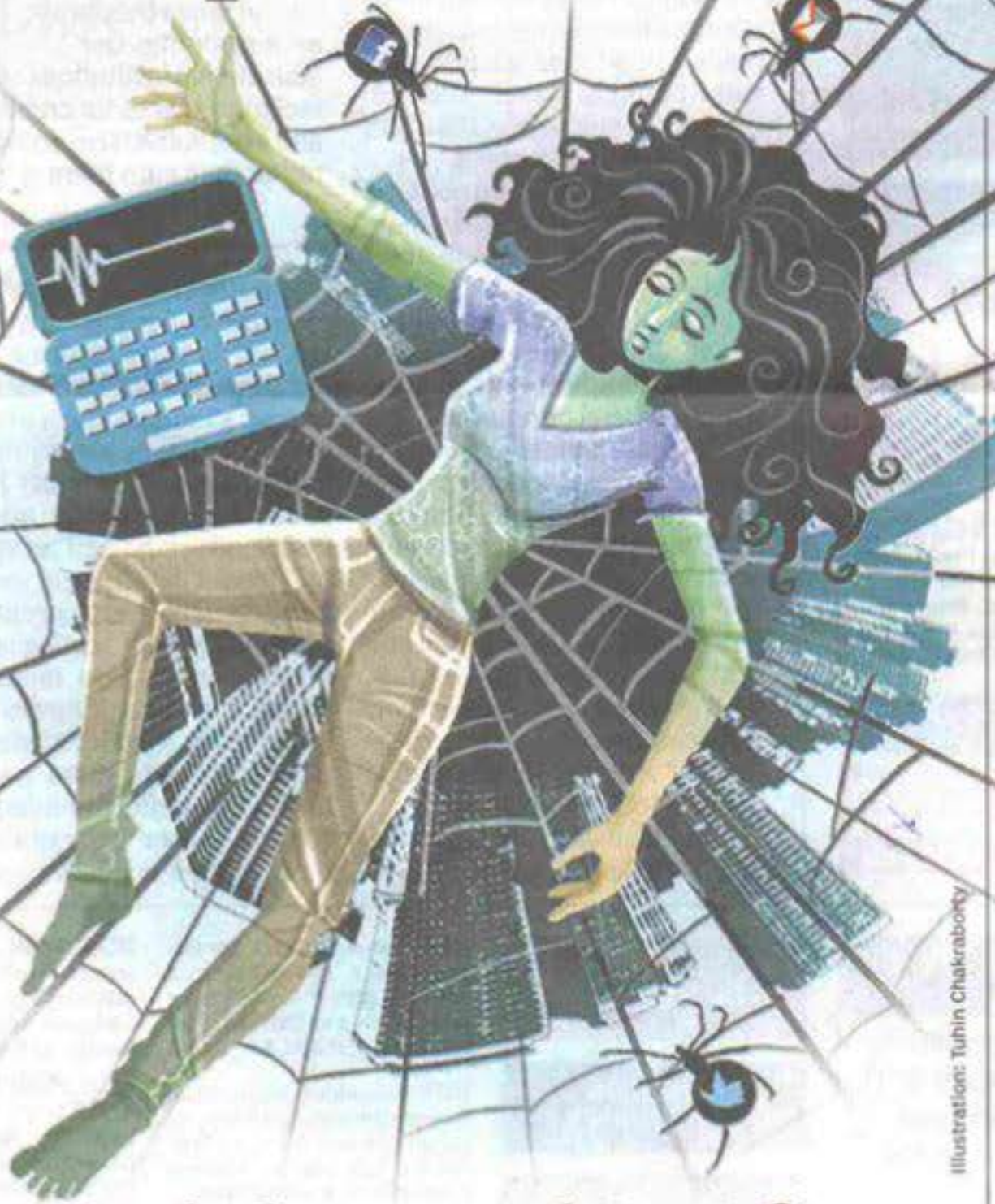
According to consultant psychologist Swarnalatha Iyer, children are in danger due to lack of awareness. "Children are drawn into social media without knowing the pitfalls. Moreover, today's parents are not clued into the latest technology

SOUND ADVICE

and often unaware of their child's activities on the internet. Asking children to stop using sites like Facebook is not the solution. There should be a collaborative effort. Schools and parents should take the child into confidence by talking to them about the advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites," says Swarnalatha.

Experts say incidents like cyber bullying can hurt a child, make her angry and also push her into depression. "Children are very sensitive and can react in unexpected ways. Children shouldn't be encouraged to use sites like Twitter and Facebook. Even if they do, there should be constant monitoring," says Prof. Chandrashekar H, department of psychiatry, Victoria Hospital.

"Cyber education is the need of the hour," says psychologist Meera Ravi. "Children are exposed to so much technology but are not educated about it. They don't know the harmful effects. Cyber education should be made compulsory in schools. Moreover, parents should be subjected to the flip side of social networking sites," says Meera.



ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU USE IT

Most teens spend about 2 hours every day on social networking sites. As for benefits, it depends how one uses it. Sometimes, it helps spreading awareness about a certain subject. A few friends are addicted to these sites. They have it on their phones, iPads, computers and almost anything which has the app.

Mahima Iyer | CLASS X, DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL (NORTH)

Yes, it's addictive and I guess it influences one's moods and views. Social media are very useful in spreading news. And yes, people on the net are very judgmental.

Anusha Ramji | CLASS X, INVENTURE ACADEMY

I do spend a lot of time on social networking sites -- about 30 minutes every other day. But I don't think I'm addicted mostly because I don't find it so appealing anymore. Facebook has lost its hype and I log onto Twitter only once in a while to check on events and articles. Mostly, it's to stay in touch with friends who either don't live in our area anymore or with friends from where I used to live.

Arundhati Subhedar | CLASS X, NATIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL, HSR

I spend about 30% of my internet time on a social networking site which is not exactly mainstream like Facebook, Twitter, etc. It's helpful as I'm a member in various communities which provide a platform for interaction with geeks. No, I'm not addicted, I log only if I have time.

Sethuraman H | CLASS IX, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOL

I did everything for fun, boyfriend told her

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Manoj reportedly told her: "I did everything for fun." He also asked her to forget whatever had happened. This development, in the last week of October, changed Shikha's life dramatically.

The teenager's suicide note reflects the trauma she underwent, as she continued to contact him online and was rebuffed. Manoj began avoiding her, pushing her into depression and, finally, to suicide.

Shikha's horrified family found her hanging on Tuesday night, after her mother returned from work. She found the house locked, and called her husband. They broke open the door with the help of

neighbours. The suicide note lay on a table nearby.

The family found out that Shikha had played with her little brother and left him at a cousin's house down the road, returned and locked the house before ending her life.

They told police they were not aware of any developments. "She was depressed for some days and we thought she was worried about her academics," her distraught father told police.

On Wednesday, Mahalakshmi Layout police arrested Manoj Kumar from his Nandini Layout residence.

They booked him under Sections 376 and 306 of the Indian Penal Code (punishment for rape, and abetting suicide).

Are you addicted?

WATCH OUT FOR THESE SYMPTOMS

- Losing track of time online
- Having trouble completing tasks at work or home
- Staying isolated from family and friends.
- Feeling guilty or defensive about your internet use
- Feeling a sense of euphoria while involved in internet activities