



Responsible Social Networking

In rapidly growing numbers, people rely on social networking to keep in touch with their friends. Unfortunately, the number of online predators and bullies also multiplies. ScuttlePad.com addresses these concerns by offering a web site where children can safely learn social networking at an early age.

Limited to kids aged 6 to 11, ScuttlePad.com combines safety features with a colorful kid-friendly format. Parents approve their child's registration via email and all photos are reviewed before going online. One of the unique safety features is their "sentence tool," which eliminates inappropriate communication by placing a limit on words used (similar to Twitter). Using a simple one-line format—"Johnny says let's be friends"...click on "Become Friends" or "Ignore This Message"—the site is a great introduction to teaching responsible social networking in a protected environment.



How does the site relate to ASD? It doesn't, specifically. Socialization for kids with autism is filled with misunderstood nuance, and our kids face multiple complex issues and impaired social thinking. Parents need to consider when, and even if, their child is ready to enter the world of social networking, which brings up other questions to ponder.

Is there a downside to encouraging young kids with autism to engage in linear concrete socialization? What lessons are learned when an anonymous person asks to be a friend and they have only two choices—be a friend versus ignore? Does this only promote the black and white, two-dimension thinking so common in our kids, and discourage the type of social thinking that builds flexible skills? Or, is this an opportunity they might otherwise miss to build friendships? Is developing a skill they can share with peers a more important consideration?

ScuttlePad.com is an excellent tool, especially when used together with other tools familiar to parents of kids on the spectrum...use it as a learning opportunity, talk with your child throughout the process, and provide a "big picture" perspective that enables understanding. Work together to build the skill of social networking.

<http://autismdigest.com/TopNavigationPages/newsbites/tabid/56/Default.aspx>