

HANDOUT: JEREMY'S STORY



Jeremy: Grooming and Luring

Debriefing:

Work through this handout with a partner or individually. Be prepared to talk through your answers with the rest of the class.

In this case study, Jeremy says:

'You can use it for anything, from doing research for a school assignment to playing online games with other people.'

What do you use the internet for in your life? List the benefits of doing these things.

Jeremy also says:

'But the dangers are just as real online. And at the end of the day it's impossible to really know who you might be talking to.'

What does Jeremy mean by this? What insight does it give you into the safety issues that face you online?

Jeremy talks about his experience with online gaming and what happened:

'I've always been into online gaming, pretty much every day I'll get home from school and log on to play RuneScape or Sleepywood or whatever. Weekends too.'

During Term 3 last year, I was pretty unhappy at school, I wasn't doing as well as usual with my schoolwork. I don't know, it was just a bad time and online gaming with other people made me feel good. My parents kept nagging me to study and stop spending so much time playing computer games. But, you know, it was a way to escape all the crap going on in my life.'

Most games allow you to send messages to other players, and sometimes you'll start a private chat with another player to discuss strategies or exchange cheats and tips.'

Anyway, I got to know this guy who was pretty obsessed with RuneScape like me. He lived in a different city but we became friends and we'd meet in private chat rooms quite regularly, cos I told him how I was a bit depressed about stuff, and he understood how I felt about school and people who were giving me a hard time.'

We got to know each other pretty well and we exchanged email addresses and mobile numbers. If Mum and Dad would kick me off the computer or make me go to bed, I could still text him. He started to ask me really personal things and, to be honest, I didn't really think it was that strange because we'd become good mates and it just felt nice having someone who was interested in me and knew how I was feeling.'

When the school holidays started, he suggested we should finally meet. He asked his Mum if I could go and stay with them and she said it was fine and that she'd pay for my plane ticket. His parents seemed so cool compared to mine.'

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I packed an overnight bag and went to the airport without telling my parents. When I got off the plane at the other end, he texted me to say I should meet him at this hotel instead. I didn't even think it was weird, but I should've.

Luckily I never made it to the hotel because I was intercepted by the police. My parents had worked out what had happened and called them straight away. It turned out that my friend, who I thought was the same age as me, was actually a 40 year old man.

Looking back on it all now, I realise how crazy what I did was. I should never have assumed that this guy was who he said he was, and I should have been really careful about how much personal information I gave him about myself. You wouldn't tell a stranger in the street that sort of stuff, so telling somebody online is no different.

The good thing about making friends online is that you always have the power. If you don't like what someone says to you or if a conversation becomes dodgy, you can ignore or block them, or you can report them to the chat room administrator, or you can just log off altogether. And if you ever feel worried or unsafe about anything, there are people you can call who are there to help you. The Kids Help Line has counsellors who are trained volunteers, and the NetAlert Help Line can help you with your internet problems.

At the time when I met my so-called friend online, I was so angry about things in my life that I didn't even stop and think about why he was so nice to me or that it could be a 40 year old man. But no matter how you're feeling, you've got to always stay tuned to the other people in a chat room, the sort of questions that are being asked and why someone might be showing an extra interest in you.'

1. List the danger signs that Jeremy didn't pick up, but that we later learn are the things that were not quite right in his online friend's story.
2. What lessons can be learned from Jeremy's story? Discuss.
3. Identify what you would change or do differently in your own life using technology as a result of reading or watching this case study.