

TIME FOR A NATIONAL PARADIGM SHIFT

When it comes to changing attitudes we can either do it individually, locally or nationally. This all depends on the scope of the problem. With the ever increasing instances of the sexual exploitation of children, especially on the internet, we need to be thinking of a national paradigm shift; a shift from “Unawareness” to “Ownership”. The attitude of “technology” is not my thing must be shifted to – “Technology is an ever present part of my life and to not be aware of the problems it can cause for my child is negligence on my part.”

There have been instances in the past that required a national movement in order to make people aware of a problem and take ownership of the solution. Think back to the early 80’s when those Tylenol packages were laced with Cyanide in Chicago or even further back to the early 50’s when throwing out a paper cup from your car was commonplace. People, from the local to national level, decided that a campaign was needed to change attitudes/habits. The end result, sealed packaging standards and the infamous “Don’t be a Litterbug” campaign were born; the latter is even being resurrected today as a reminder to all.

How have your attitudes/habits been altered? Do you wear a seatbelt, hold onto your kids’ hands while shopping at the mall, do your kids hitchhike, do you smoke? All of these changes came about through national awareness initiatives of the problem and I am sure you can think of many more examples. Would you today even consider buying a consumable product without a sealed opening? Do we even think about throwing a fast food wrapper outside the window of a car?

These changes in attitude were brought about by a deep concern for the problem that was being created and it took a national movement to shift the paradigm. These shifts included the government and media efforts to have the citizens first become aware of the problem and then offered solutions to rectify the problem; the people listened and responded. We need this type of attitude change for kids online.

With the ever increasing number of crimes against children on the internet, we can no longer avoid the issue but rather take on a pledge for this not to continue. Every parent/guardian of children should be an advocate for warning kids of the dangers in having an online “relationship” or even online conversations with people they do not know. The phrase “I am just not good at technology, I just don’t understand all those new *things*” should be just as abhorrent to hear as “I just never understood that reading thing.”