

Book Review of #lightwebdarkweb – Three Reasons To Reform Social Media Be4 It Re-Forms Us

by Raffi Cavoukian Softcover, 178 Pages

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I offered to review this book for personal reasons. I live less than a mile from a high school where a young teenage girl was bullied at school and on social media until she turned to suicide to escape the shame and the pain.

This book was inspired by the death of another Canadian teenager, Amanda Todd, a fifteen year old who took her own life after years of cyber bullying. The news of her death inspired Rafi, songwriter and child advocate, to devote himself to warning others of the dangers of our popular technology on the lives of children.

The dark side of the web and social media is very real but this book is not one of despair. It is a message of hope, if action is taken now. It is not easy to convince people to change. Raffi's foundational conviction that we should postpone the exposure of technology on infants and children is contrary to popular opinion of parents, educators and other adults who believe that such technology should be introduced earlier rather than later. Raffi is far from being a lone voice in the wilderness as he cites much research to support his belief that technology is harmful to children under a certain age – harmful to their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. The impact of this book rests upon this conviction and he makes a convincing argument for it.

I learned a great deal from this book and was challenged in many ways. I discovered that there is a great deal that can be done to make social media safer for children. One clear action is to require social media sites like Facebook to confirm the age of users, just as banks and credit card companies do when individuals apply to use their services. An even simpler action is for parents to monitor their children's use of technology.

The dangers of the web and social media extend further than I had considered. The danger is not just for our children but there is a global impact on the environment and on those who receive our e-trash in developing countries. Dangerous and rare metals are used to produce many of our tech gadgets and their disposal is harming the environment. The recycling and disposal of our e-trash is a desperate source of income for some countries that are paying a high price for the impact on their environment and on the health of children and adults who recycle and dispose of our out-dated gadgets.

I appreciate the scope of this book in that it starts with the impact on children to the impact globally. It is not based on the opinion of one person but on evidence from a wide variety of sources such as radio and television interviews, CNN, documentaries, surveys, scientific studies and research from the fields of medicine and child development.

There are many suggestions given for what can be done by individuals, by those creating and monitoring social media, by companies that produce technological devices and by those of us consumers who buy them, use them and then throw them away.

This is not a complicated problem to solve. There are only two obstacles that prevent adults from protecting children from the dangers of the Internet and social media – unawareness of the dangers, and apathy. Reading this book will eliminate the first obstacle.

Written by Rev. Shirley DeMerchant