

## Is MySpace safe?

ADRA COOPER | STAFF WRITER

The pervasiveness of online "networking" sites has become irrefutable: MySpace, the Internet's most popular Web-community site, currently has over 106 million registered users.

Recently, families of five teenage girls, who claim they were sexually assaulted by men they met through MySpace, are suing the site. The lawsuits, all separate cases, allege negligence, fraud and misrepresentation by the Web site.

MySpace has reacted by initiating a new feature called Zephyr, expected to be launched later this year. Zephyr will allow parents to view the name, age and location details entered by their child on his or her profile.

I do not have a profile on MySpace or any other Web-community site. I will not deny that these sites have some merit; they are great networking tools and can provide exposure to music, art, writing, etc. that wouldn't otherwise be available.

But I shy away from MySpace, because I find that network sites condone self-indulgence, false reality, and overall creepiness. I enjoy some level of anonymity and do not feel enthused about posting pictures of myself on the Internet or keeping in touch with people that I haven't seen since elementary school.

So, I do think MySpace

is sketchy, and I am not surprised that sexual predators have lured young girls via the site. But to blame the Web site in these situations is atrocious.

Sexual predators have molested children long before the emergence of the Internet. If these young girls did not have the common sense to know that it's a bad idea to meet up with a complete strang-

er, then perhaps their parents should look at themselves to see who is truly responsible. Shouldn't it be the job of the parents to know where their children are and whom they are with?

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children says 33 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds reported that their parents know "very little" or "nothing" about what they do on the Internet.

More than likely, parents are left in the dark because their children are doing things that they know their parents wouldn't approve of. However, a tool like Zephyr is not the answer in increasing Web site safety. Instead of shamelessly spying on their children, parents should open communication with them.

According to The San Francisco Chronicle, an attorney representing one

of the families said that MySpace is like a daycare facility that doesn't adequately protect its customers. Does it make sense for a Web site to have more liability for young teens than their parents?

No matter how many Zephyrs are created, a networking site with over 106 million users will never be safe or well-regulated, unless MySpace performs background checks on all of its users.

Even that wouldn't make the Web site secure. The problem with MySpace profiles is the very reason why people are compelled to create one in the first place: you can become whoever you want to be. Fourteen-year-old girls can become 19-year-old women and 45-year-old sexual predators can become 15-year-old boys.

In this day and age, the dangers of online networking are well known. MySpace cannot take responsibility for the millions of people who join the site. It is up to the people who choose to create an online profile to do so in a safe and smart manner and look out for people who don't.

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## Honest answers to awkward questions

LAUREN NAGAO | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

**How do you ask someone to go down on you?**

We are living in a culture saturated in sex. So why is it that asking someone to pleasure you is just as hard as ever?

This is probably not a problem for everyone, but if you're a slightly awkward woman, like me, then please read on. There is a lot more mystique surrounding the vagina than

the penis in our everyday lives. Blowjob, fellatio, head; these are all words that commonly come up in a fifth-grader's vocabulary, but the female genitals and their stimulation seem like top-secret knowledge. Vaginas simply don't get a lot of time in movies, songs or general conversation. The result is that men and women alike know little about that area: geography, maintenance or pleasure.

Cunnilingus (oral stimulation of the vagina) is one

of those 10-point words that eluded me in my adolescence. Although the respectability of the name "blowjob" is debatable, at least the penis has a slang term. Vagina vocabulary is still stuck in the clinical trials, which is why asking someone to perform the act can still seem really awkward, though definitely worth the trouble. Even in my most comfortable, ardent-feminist, body-loving moments, I still have a hard time popping the question: Would you like some vagina

with that?

So this is where I finally give you the magic formula: (1) Ask. Okay, well that's about it. For example, "I think it would be really hot if you went down on me right now," or perhaps, "Would you like to go down on me, because I think that would be fabulous, darling." "It looks like it's going to rain today. How about some cunnilingus?" Add expletives as needed. Write a note. Have the courage to ask for what you want, when you want it, nicely.

**Does tequila really make you horny?**

Our brains aren't the only things overloaded: our livers are working overtime, too. College students these days are boozing like it's nobody's business. We're drowning in the stuff. This being the case, a lot of the sexual situations we're experiencing involve alcohol as well. The rules say no drinking and sexing; you can't give consent. Agree or disagree, it's worth thinking about. Though thinking and tequila do not seem to get along.

We certainly seem to get crazier with tequila, and more often than not, a little more randy with this particular evil. Even though it's alcohol, I can't remember the last time people mellowed out after drinking tequila. Is it just the body shots, or is

tequila really the Viagra of liquors? If alcohol is a depressant, then why does tequila make you feel so feisty?

One thing that does seem suspicious is that tequila is made with a lot of sugar-cane water. My personally favorite theory is that people equate tequila with liveliness and therefore sexuality because they are simply on a huge, drunken sugar high. This seems to make sense if you've ever been on a tequila binge (like a kid the day after Halloween, but drunk).

In order to answer the question "does tequila really make you horny?" I'd say no. It just makes you crazy. Alcohol can lower your inhibitions and loosen you up for a fun night with the friends, or the toilet. Unfortunately, it also lowers your ability to engage in key activities, such as coherent decision-making, or say, walking. These are both things you need to be able to do in order to give and receive consent for sexual activity. Please be safe if you're drinking, whatever it is. Take a rain check and make sure that special someone seems like just as good of an idea over coffee as they did over a bottle of tequila. Don't let your friends drink and drive; don't let them drink and sex either.

*This article is presented in conjunction with Cobb House, Guilford's Sexual Health and Awareness alternative house. To submit a question, e-mail Lauren Nagao at lnagao@guilford.edu*

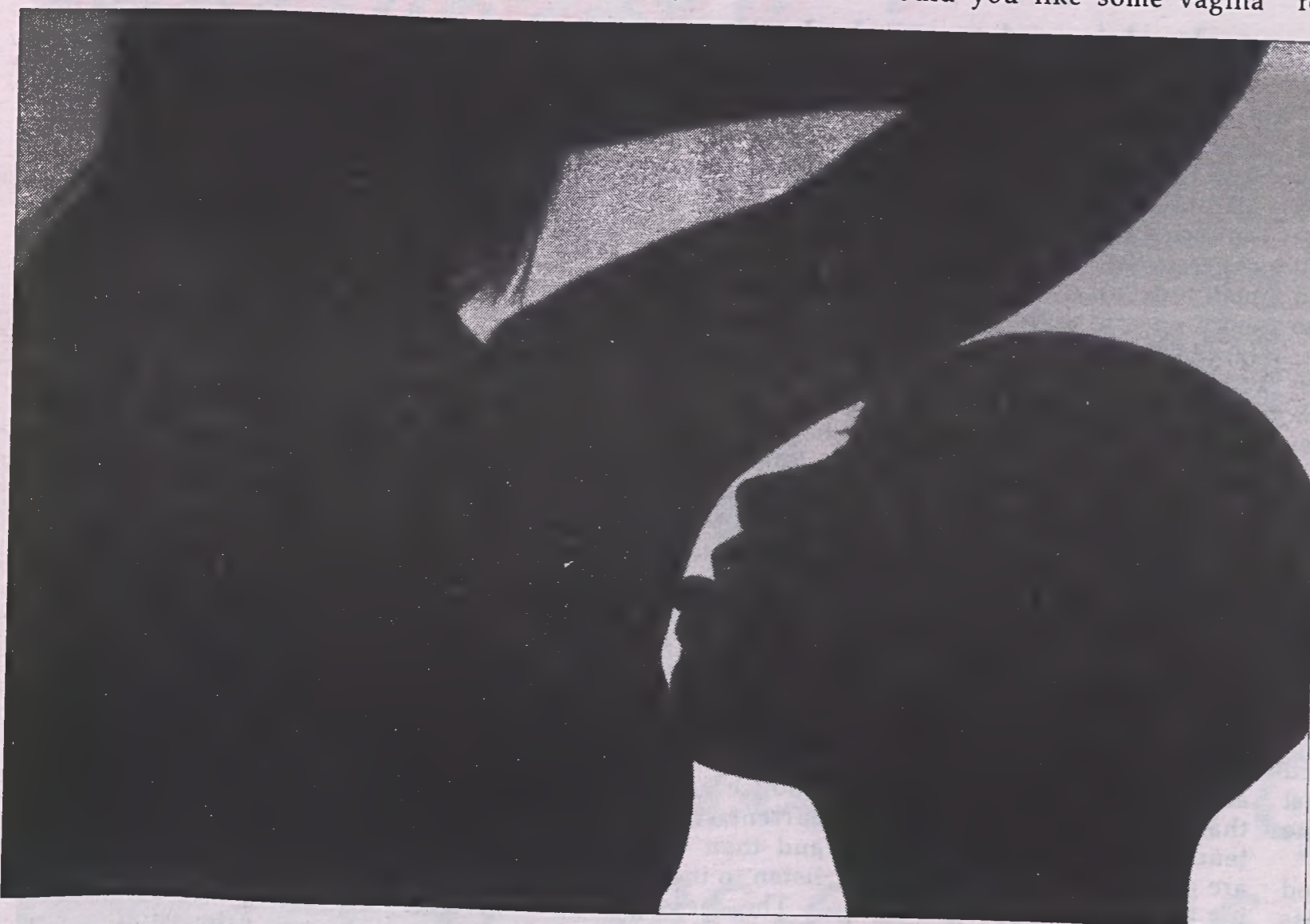


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Communication with your partner about intimacy can help avoid awkward situations.