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When someone violates your privacy, is there anything that can possibly be done to repair the damage? In this digital age, can we even expect the same rights to privacy as we have experienced in the past? This week is Privacy Awareness Week and a timely opportunity for us to reflect on these and other privacy issues.

Privacy Violations

A man in Sydney was recently sentenced to six months' home detention for posting naked images of his ex-girlfriend on Facebook. Can a conviction and punishment really make amends for his actions? Those images will exist forever in some shape or form and those that have seen them cannot "unsee" them.

These privacy violations are by no means uncommon. To a lesser degree, we've always shared with others those things that have been shared with us in confidence, but never before have we been able to so easily show these things to so many other people.

Many reviews into privacy laws are currently underway in Australia and overseas, but will laws, regulations and penalties really address the core of these privacy violations?

Preventing Privacy Violations

Our philosophy has always been to prevent crimes or unethical behaviours, rather than deal with the effects of their occurrence. In any prevention programme,

Time2Talk

This section provides some useful conversation starters for talking with young people about their use of technology.

What does privacy mean to you?

How much responsibility do you have to manage your privacy and prevent the misuse of your information?

Who do you think is most likely to disrespect others rights to privacy? What do you think can be done to prevent their misuse?

Do you think we are doing enough as a community to manage and respect privacy?

Opportunity Reduction/Environmental Design Programmes

The final approach would be to reduce the conditions or opportunities for violating privacy rights. How would this work in a digital, connected society? It would require the concerted efforts of all stakeholders to create a hostile environment for privacy violators and would involve changing to a culture which values privacy rights, create robust legislation that is backed by equivalent judicial outcomes, improved digital literacy for all users so that they can

practitioners would often address one of the three key elements: victim, offender or opportunity/environment. How would these programs work in a privacy awareness space and how effective would they be?

Victim-based Programmes

Programmes that focus on victim behaviour would aim to encourage individuals to limit the digital creation of private information and avoid situations which place them at risk. In other words, “if you don’t make it, it can’t be used against you.” Whilst this may be useful in deterring the creation of illegal material such as hate groups and sexually explicit images, it is unlikely to prevent people from sharing secrets, ideas and rumours digitally.

Many would argue that individuals have a right to express themselves in any way they choose and shouldn’t have to change **their** behaviour in fear of the misbehaviour of others.

Offender-based Programmes

This then leads us to programmes which focus on offender behaviour. As it is difficult to know who the would-be offenders are, these programmes are often aimed at the whole community. In regards to privacy awareness, these offender-based programmes would aim to deter individuals from violating other’s privacy with the threat of legal action or other recourse.

Without a robust piece of digital privacy legislation, or precedent set in court, individuals may not be wrong in believing that they’re unlikely to be caught nor likely to be penalised roughly.

better manage their privacy and regulations for organisations that deal with private information.

A programme of this type would need to be long term if it is to have any meaningful results.

Young People and Privacy

Children and young people are growing up in the Petri dish of privacy changes. They have different notions of privacy than their parents, carers and teachers and will ultimately shape our conceptions of privacy into the future.

We need to provide them with the social and digital literacy skills to manage their own privacy, and respect the privacy rights of others.

