CPI *Unrestrained* Transcription

Episode 37: Diana Graber

Record Date: 1/17/17

Length: 40:09

Host: Terry Vittone

Terry: Hello, and welcome to *Unrestrained*, the CPI podcast series. This is your host, Terry Vittone, and today I'm joined by Diana Graber. Hello and welcome, Diana.

Diana: Thanks so much for having me.

Terry: You're welcome. Diana is a recognized expert on digital literacy. She writes for and appears often in the press on topics related to how technology impacts human behavior, including guest blogs for CPI. Her no-nonsense approach comes from being an educator, media producer, academic, and, most of all, a mom. Diana is a former adjunct faculty member of the Media Psychology M.A. program at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, where she taught Media Psychology for the 21st Century. She also developed and teaches a middle school media literacy program called Cyber Civics™.

Today, we're going to talk with Diana about Cyber Civics™, and how it can help kids learn about digital citizenship and online safety, and how parents and educators can help kids embrace technology safely and wisely. We're also going to talk about a sister website of Diana's, CyberWise, whose motto is "No Grownup Left Behind!"

All right, Diana. Could we begin today by having you give our listeners an overview of how and why you started CyberWise, the meaning of your motto, and the concept of digital citizenship as a broad-based concept?

Diana: Sure. Well, first of all, thanks for asking me those questions, because I really love talking about all this.

Terry: Thank you.

Diana: I'll start with something you mentioned earlier, which is media psychology, and a lot of people scratch their heads, wondering what that is. But it's really the study of human behavior in relations to media. I found that a really interesting idea and topic. So as a former film and video producer, I saw media really changing when my children were younger. So I went back to school and got a master's in something called "Media

Psychology and Social Change." While I was there, really what I noticed is there's all this great research happening in the realm of digital literacy.

But it wasn't getting to the people who needed it most, which were parents and teachers. So myself and another student decided to start CyberWise, which was basically a place where we could use our entertainment background to talk to parents and teachers about this new digital realm that their kids were entering in. We decided to call it "CyberWise," and we like the motto "No Grownup Left Behind!" because we felt like that was very apropos. So many grownups were being left behind.

So that's a little bit of the background of CyberWise. As you mentioned, we really focus on this concept of digital citizenship, which is the safe and responsible use of digital tools. That's really foundational to everything that we all do online. A lot of other concepts and topics grow out of that, but that's really the bedrock of what we provide, both to CyberWise and Cyber Civics™.

Terry: I see. I was reading [online] where you said that your daughter's eighth-grade class had a social media incident that sort of brought this to the fore. Could you tell that story?

Diana: Right. Well, ironically, as I was graduating out of the program and I had a paper published about digital literacy, it's all very academic, and literally that same week my eighth-grade daughter and her class—the kids at the time were really into Facebook, because that was pre-Snapchat and pre-Instagram, and all that. It was so lightweight now, looking back at it. But when you're an eighth grader, it didn't feel that way. But there was a girl in the class that posted, almost every day, pictures of herself and her friends. But she carefully picked pictures in which she looked really good and her friends, every time, looked terrible. To an eighth-grade girl, that's a big deal.

My daughter was not really the kind of kid that cared about this so much. But there was a girl in the class that this really bothered. So this girl was a vlogger. She kept a video log online. In one of these videos, she claimed, she goes, "Oh, it just makes me so mad. I really want to kill that girl."

Terry: Uh oh.

Diana: Of course, the parents saw that without full context, and went to the school administrator and reported it as cyberbullying. He was trying to piece all the pictures together and literally spent a week with crying girls in and out of his office, and irate parents, and it was just eating all this administrative time. I watched it thinking, "Wow, we should try to preempt these issues." So I volunteered at the time to teach digital literacy to the sixth graders, and he said, "Yes. Can you start tomorrow?" We had a block that was called "Civics" that we turned into Cyber Civics™, and that's really how our program was born.

Terry: I think that really speaks to the sensitivity that people need to bring to their choices about how they express themselves online, because of the broad-based nature of the audience that's going to see it. Without, as you said, complete context, you have to take that seriously.

Diana: Oh, yeah. I mean, that's a very minor example of the really hurtful things and dangerous things that happen online. But to a child, even something minor can feel very hurtful. To a kid who's sensitive, I mean, that's why we see incidences of kids sadly taking their lives, and that kind of thing, from cyberbullying.

Terry: Right.

Diana: So it's an important issue for parents and teachers to get on top of.

Terry: I can see that. I mean, you wrote that media literacy experts agree that the most important skills are social and behavioral skills that are outside of technology. You could almost see that if you were going to choose pictures of yourself with your friends to share around a table, for instance—

Diana: Right.

Terry: —you might be much more aware of picking things that were flattering to everybody. Because the technology puts that secondary layer in place, where people might behave in ways that they might not in an actual, physical social setting.

Diana: Right. That's something, honestly that keeps me up at night. We have so many really young kids spending a ton of time behind a screen. I mean, the latest statistics are tweens, kids between 10 and 12, spend 6 hours a day behind a screen, and teenagers it's 9 hours a day. These are hours that they're not developing the social behavioral skills that will guide them in the digital world. I mean, those years of development when we play outside with our friends and we see a person's face, what it looks like when you say something mean to them, all that stuff is just the bedrock of being human and being empathetic.

Terry: Well said.

Diana: We need those skills more than ever today.

Terry: On your site, you write that Cyber Civics™: A Digital Citizenship & Literacy Curriculum for Middle School, is a "turnkey in-classroom program [that] meets an urgent demand to equip students with essential digital life skills," kind of the things we were just talking about. Could you, Diana, explain the fundamental concepts of your curriculum and the essential skills that they bring to today's students?

Diana: Sure. Well, what I discovered when I started teaching this to kids is that digital citizenship cannot be taught in a one-hour assembly or one-hour lesson. It is a very complex topic. So with the children, we are very thoughtful about starting at sixth grade when they've developed the ethical thinking skills to be able to think through the scenarios that could happen online. So we spend a lot of time in that first year talking about what it means to be a citizen, not really online at all, but just a citizen of the globe or your community, or of your classroom. Then, how do you take those skills to a place that doesn't have social norms or laws?

Then, we help them understand their digital reputation and the privacy that they should be taking care of online. And the impact of trying to get a job or going to college when you have unpleasant things on your digital reputation, and how to show yourself online via a selfie. There's a lot of topics that we cover, cyberbullying, digital drama. All that's covered in sixth grade. What we discovered is that once we'd given children this very strong foundation is, "Okay. Well, let's build on that skill. Let's teach them now how to use the Internet as a terrific resource and information source."

So the second year, seventh grade, is all about information literacy, which is learning how to do research online and how to use search engines, and what is Wikipedia, and how to get personal information, to get the results that you want. Again, we are very rigid about copyrights, fair use, all of that. Then, our final and third year is called "Media Literacy for Positive Participation," which is really helping kids evaluate media messages. This is where we get into fake news and all that.

Then, learning how to be a positive contributor to the online world, which is super-important, because we don't want kids to just be these bystanders that get caught in just reading the same old thing every day. We want them to contribute in a positive way, because we need them. Adults haven't done a very good job in this realm, so I'm hoping that we can do better with the next generation.

Terry: Would you say that there is a stark contrast between, say, digital facility and digital literacy?

Diana: Oh, by all means. I mean, put a child alone with an iPhone® for three minutes, and they'll have it mastered. So learning how to push buttons, I mean, it's innate in these kids. That's not where they need our help. Frankly, they know more than any of *us* do, and we need their help in that realm. But they do need our wisdom and our lived experience to know how to act as a human online. That's really important, because that's something that's taught over a lifetime. I mean, it's the golden rules we learned as children. We learned those rules so that we'd be nice in our neighborhood. I mean, to our kids, their neighborhood is the world.

Terry: Right.

Diana: So they need these rules more than ever.

Terry: I would imagine that sometimes students actually bring home the lessons from your program, Cyber Civics™, and actually educate their parents about these issues.

Diana: Well, it's funny, because it's actually how CyberWise started. Because I actually started teaching Cyber Civics™ before CyberWise started, and one of the kids on the way out of the classroom said, "Mrs. Graber, you really need to teach these lessons to my mom." [laughter] So that was what got it started. But one of the things we've done in Cyber Civics™ is, it's available to schools online, but within the program there are letters that are sent home. They're prewritten, but they're send-home letters to parents that give them an activity to do every week that aligns with the lesson that the child learned at school.

Our hope is that by doing these activities together at home, you're right, the kids can impart some of this wisdom onto their parents and vice versa, because we really need parents to be engaged in this whole realm.

Terry: Mm-hmm. So it encourages dialogue as well.

Diana: Yes.

Terry: That's great.

Diana: Yeah. It gives tangible things to do, which I think is a lot of fun.

Terry: Do you find kids, in your estimation, are frustrated by their parents' lack of expertise?

Diana: Oh, yeah. I mean, it's so funny to me. Because especially with the sixth graders, they're starting to go online and join social networks, and a lot of the kids will tell me, "Gosh. I wish my mom knew what I was doing, or she paid attention." I know that sounds crazy. But it's this little, tiny window that happens when they first start going on, and that window closes pretty fast. So I always tell parents, "Take advantage of that. This is the time your kid lives more than half their life online, so why would you not want to be part of that life?"

They want you there at that time, and again that window will close, but you're in. So you might as well take the opportunity to get a step in the door.

Terry: I think it's significant how critically short that window is open—

Diana: I know.

Terry: —for parents to get in. I mean, if you miss it . . .

Diana: You're out.

Terry: It would be a rare person that could catch up, effectively, I would think, a rare adult.

Diana: Very true. Yeah. You've got to stay with them every step of the way.

Terry: In one of your [blog posts](#) for CPI—thank you for writing those.

Diana: Oh, sure.

Terry: I will highlight this in the copy for our interview. You ask whether the Internet is getting worse for our kids. First of all, what do you mean by "worse for our kids"? Secondly, is it?

Diana: Well, I'm going to ask you what you think. I think that adults have done a pretty good job of being digital role models. I think that our communication online that we read today has really devolved to be uncivil, and sometimes outright mean and cruel. I think that, I mean, regardless of what side of the aisle you stand on, in the top office of the land we see examples of social media language that's downright mean.

Terry: Indeed.

Diana: It's not grammatically correct. It's cruel. You don't have to be a democrat or republican to believe that this is really not the best thing for children to aspire to. I mean, I want our children to learn how to be civil and have discourse, and learn from one another, and be kind. I don't think that there's many parents that I know that don't want the same for their children. So I think we have a lot of cleaning up to do, and I'm really hoping that the next generation can do it better.

Terry: I really appreciate your message here, because I think speaking of, not naming names, but being digitally comprehensible is not the same as being digitally literate, in my opinion.

Diana: Right.

Terry: There's a big difference there. I mean, when you use it as, for instance, a bully pulpit, and your messages are not even grammatically correct or they are lacking a fundamental sort of vetting, that doesn't speak to what my idea of literacy is.

Diana: Right. It's hard, because on one hand we tell kids how important their digital reputation is. Because everything they put online will be online forever, and people will find it and judge their character by what they put online.

Terry: Right.

Diana: So even composing a tweet or writing a text, all of that is permanent. So I really try to get across to the kids, "Sleep on it, or think about what you're going to write, or think about the person on the receiving end before you put anything online, because it will reflect back poorly upon you." That's a really important lesson. Do they have adult role models to look up to? That's a question I ask myself. It's very, very hard to teach this to kids these days when they don't see that [online respect] represented by the adults that they look up to.

Terry: It seems almost as if the lowest common denominator form of trolling or lurking, or some of the negativity we see in threads, for instance, on YouTube, would be an example of how the Internet is getting worse. It's almost scripting them that dialogue between credible speakers can include these kinds of diatribes and attacks. It seems to me a disturbing trend.

Diana: Yeah. I don't want to be all doom and gloom, because there's a lot of lovely stuff online as well.

Terry: Right.

Diana: I mean, I see a lot of kids doing super-positive stuff. There's a lot of uplifting things. I would say on my own social media, probably because I'm very careful about who I decide to follow, is stuff that's positive and uplifting. I think that we can create that kind of realm online if we want to. But I think it's important that we do this work with kids when they first start going online, so they can understand how to create the environment that they want to be part of.

Terry: This leads to my next question. Because in your blog post for CPI, you cite examples from authorities like *The New York Times*, who say that it's commonplace for kids and adults to have to sort of negotiate this trough of violent and really unsavory content to get to content, as you said, that has real meaning, value, and even beauty. How do we guide young people toward this positive and productive content and technology?

Diana: Well, I mean, that's exactly why I think with our program we take three years to do it, because this is not something that you can impart upon a child in one lesson. So I put a lot of responsibility on their shoulders to think about what kind of digital world they want to create for themselves. Because we have to remember, it's their world largely. I mean, it's devoid of adult role models. In a lot of places where the kids hang out, Instagram, Snapchat, there's not adults. So they're creating their own social norms.

So I put it on the kids' shoulders and say, "Look at what kind of social norms you want in this world. You are the guys that are going to create them, so let's talk about it and create it together." Largely, kids want to be surrounded by kids they like. No one wants to get bullied. No one wants to be mean.

Terry: Right.

Diana: There's mechanisms that they can do to make that happen. So we talk a lot about what it means to be an upstander. "If you see something cruel online, what can you do? You can block the person. You can report the person. You can stand up for the person. You can support the person who's being targeted." There's a lot of powerful acts that you can take online to help eliminate the trolling, and kids need to learn what those acts are.

Terry: Now, at what point in your Cyber Civics™ curriculum would an issue like that appear?

Diana: Well, I mean, it starts at the very beginning. Again, it's embedded throughout the three years.

Terry: I see.

Diana: But we do a whole block on cyberbullying, where we do scenarios on what you can do to be an "upstander," is what we call it. They get strategies that they can implement online and learn them, and get tested on them. The kids like it, because another big thing we talk about is sexting. A lot of people don't even bring that topic up, and kids need to know what they can do. They need strategies so that these things don't come back to bite them.

Terry: Beyond the exposure, because of the permanence of a posting, how do we speak to an issue as sensitive as sexting to students in middle school?

Diana: Well, the way I do it is I bring in examples of kids not much older than themselves and what has happened to those who have been involved in a sexting incident. I mean, it's important for kids to know what a "sext" is, that it's a visual or written sexual image. Likewise, it's important for them to know that it's a very serious thing, that if they get caught sexting that is [can be] either sending and/or receiving. A lot of kids don't know that being on the receiving end is just as troublesome as being on the sending end, and what could possibly happen. In every state, it's different. But many states, you're treated like a child pornographer.

Terry: Well, you're treated as an accomplice to the act, then.

Diana: Right. In some cases, up to 200 kids in a school have been suspended for it.

Terry: Wow.

Diana: Yeah. So I bring into the classroom an example of one of these incidences, and show them the news article and the video. I put it on their lap and say, "What do you think about this? Do you think this is fair?" Largely, they don't. "Well, how do you think you're going to keep this from happening to yourself in high school?" They talk about it amongst themselves and kind of decide, well, come to the conclusion, that some of the ways to avoid this from happening is to have the education, number one. But number two, be careful who your

friends are online. That's number two. Number three, if you are involved in this incident to know what to do, so that you're not the kid that's going to be suspended.

Terry: Mm-hmm. Boy, when I hear you talk about it, it's almost hard not to think about this great access that technology gives us as being this really low-slung engine of progress. That it seeks the most base in human nature because that tends to grab the most attention, and profitability-wise it's also probably leading the pack as well. I mean, it truly is an obstacle to confront with real gravity.

Diana: Well, yeah. I mean, many days I think that too. But I feel lucky to be around so many middle school kids. Because I tell you, given the chance, a lot of them want to do really great things online. They want to create positive apps, and they want to help each other, and they want to have dialogue. I think that given the tools to do this, and the reason to do it, and seeing the upside of this, I don't think it's too late. I think we can make some changes, but it's going to take a lot of work. We have to carve out time in our educational system to talk with kids about these issues. I mean, they spend more time with their screens than they do in school or with their families.

Terry: Yes. I think that's in your paper. Isn't it?

Diana: Yeah. So the fact that we're not educating them how to be digital citizens or to have life skills in this realm is just nuts to me.

Terry: So Cyber Civics™ is a real counterbalance to that other side, I mean, really in emphasizing the positive and the incredible reach of a positive message, and new content that is celebratory or innovative. To stress that access to that technology will promote their own positive idea and their own uniquely positive character has got to be a very potent motivator for students, I would imagine.

Diana: Right. They have to, because more and more college recruiters are looking at their digital reputations that there's a great incentive there to be nice and positive online. Right?

Terry: Right. Indeed. I want to switch gears a little bit here, towards something that's been in the news lately. There was a recent Stanford study about the prevalence of fake news, certainly very prevalent in the news these days because of our political environment. The Stanford study found that a majority of kids, middle schoolers included, I mean, kids that should have developed some sense of judgement in fact can't distinguish fake news from legitimate reporting. I'm wondering, how can parents help their kids evaluate the legitimacy of online content?

Diana: Well, I mean, this is a really great argument for media literacy in school. Because right now, that's where we're getting our information largely, is from the Internet. We need to be taught how to read it, just like we were taught how to read a book. So it's something that we do quite a lot in Cyber Civics™. One of the lessons I really love is actually, I got it

from Howard Rheingold, who's a Stanford professor who came up with this acronym called "CRAP Detection."

I think a lot of people have heard of that. But for those who haven't, when the kids come in the classroom, I write "CRAP" on the board and they're like, "Oh, my gosh. Mrs. Graber, what are we learning about today?" I'm like, "This is what you're learning." So I got their attention. Right?

Terry: Right.

Diana: So CRAP actually stands for a way to recognize crap online. The C stands for "current." How current is your information? The R is for how reliable, or does [it] have references? The A is for who's the author? Is it a real person with degrees, or is it just somebody in their bedroom in Milwaukee? Then, the P is for "purpose," or the point of view as a person. Did they have an axe to grind, or is it really a level story?

So really, using those four things, it's very handy to be able to evaluate a news article or a website to determine its veracity. I use it myself when I'm going through Facebook and people have posted articles. I don't read the article until I've given it the crap detection test.

Terry: [Laughs]

Diana: I really don't. So that's what we do in the classroom with the students. It's something they'll never forget, and it's very handy. You ask what parents can do. I mean, maybe teach them this test. Talk to them about clickbait. What is clickbait? I bet a lot of parents don't know what that is.

Terry: Right.

Diana: But it's when a headline is written in a way to grab a bunch of readers, and maybe it doesn't even relate to what the story is about. So I mean, it's a whole new world of literacy out there that we need to be addressing and teaching too.

Terry: I mean, it can even be with the prevalence of now what's called "native advertising," which appears to be content that has been vetted by a credible source that is in fact placed as an ad.

Diana: Yeah.

Terry: I'd like to think that the people that are selling that sort of space are vetting their content pretty rigorously.

Diana: Yeah. That's the other thing, is I teach the kids about how that happens. We just did a lesson last week about how it's the beginning of understanding that every time you give a website personal information, in return you're getting customized information. But you're also creating this filter bubble, where you're just giving yourself back things you already like or know. For kids to understand how that happens is very important so if they don't like it, they can change it.

Just knowing what cookies are, a lot of adults don't understand that when you visit a website, it drops a cookie on your computer so it remembers your personal information. Kids love knowing that stuff, because then they can make a choice.

Terry: That's an excellent point. I mean, it's amazing in how these cookies work, really from a marketing sense, how directed they really are towards—I mean it can almost seem like this sort of intuitive magic where an ad appears for maybe someone interested in buying a watch. Two weeks later, on a page that's completely unrelated, there appears a banner ad for a watch.

Diana: Right. It's crazy. Yeah.

Terry: You say, "Wow." I mean, there's some great expertise—

Diana: Oh, yeah.

Terry: —behind that sort of data mining going on.

Diana: Yeah. Why wouldn't we teach kids how that happens so they know?

Terry: Good point. I mean, one of the things you said earlier about the bubble leads into my next question about the social media phenomenon known as the "spiraling feedback loop"— why it's exhausting and misleading, and why it can reinforce and inspire all the same interests, and regurgitate the interests that the child is pursuing online.

Diana: Right.

Terry: Can you speak to that a little bit?

Diana: Well, that's what I was explaining when we—in Information Literacy, which is the second year of Cyber Civics™, we do a whole block on personal information to get them to understand this concept about how the Internet collects your personal information to give you back a customized experience. In some ways that's great, when Amazon tells us what books it thinks we like. But in some ways, especially when you're a young person and you're trying to get knowledge, it really limits the knowledge you get.

It was really funny, because I had a class on Friday. It's hard to get their attention. But I told them that the school principal had hired a research company to come in and to follow them around for a week, and to write down everything they do and everything they eat, and everyone they talk to.

Terry: Oh, my god.

Diana: The kids were so angry.

Terry: Oh, well they must have been.

Diana: So I said, "Write me a paragraph telling me why you think this is bad." So we went through that whole process. Of course, they're like, "It's creepy and they're stalking me. It's my personal information. Blah, blah, blah." So at the end, I tell the kids, "Well, you know, this is what happens every time you go online." They were like, "Whoa!"

Terry: What a great sort of lesson. It's like, "Hey, just because the person is there and I've notified you that they're going to be here in flesh and blood," it's like the person has become the metaphor for the technology that is tracking the same thing.

Diana: Yeah. It kind of blew their minds. Then, I had to teach them the vocabulary words, "third-party," "personally identifiable information," "cookies," and what would normally be a very boring assignment, they were totally into. So they care.

Terry: Almost like holding back the Oz curtain and seeing how it's manipulated by—

Diana: Yeah.

Terry: —someone with skill and an agenda.

Diana: Right. They deserve to know this stuff. Their parents deserve to know.

Terry: Mm-hmm. In one of your blogs for CPI called "Is the Internet Getting Worse for Our Kids?" you include the wish, "My digital wish is to humanize social media. Let's create the environment we'd like to live in." Even though a lot of the digital landscape leaves people sort of gasping for a breath of fresh air because of some of the unsavory content, isn't what we've created necessarily in a greater cultural sense what we've asked for?

Diana: Ooh. Are you asking if we're just getting back, or seeing a reflection of ourselves?

Terry: Well, kind of, yeah. I mean, I just wondered, because you're so close to it.

Diana: Yeah.

Terry: I guess this is a tougher philosophical question, but I'm interested in your thought on it.

Diana: Well, it depends on whose voice is louder. I like to tell kids and to remind adults that we have power. I mean, if there's something that we don't like, you can block it. You can report it. If someone is being mean to someone, you can support the person who's being targeted. It happens a lot. If someone is being a troll, report the troll. Don't like what they do. Don't even read what they do.

Terry: Right.

Diana: I mean, trolls will go away if they don't have an audience. They're just a bully looking for someone to bully.

Terry: True.

Diana: So it's really like taking the power back. I don't even want to say that it's a level playing field. Because as I mentioned before, I think there's a lot of lovely people and lovely things online, we just need to give them louder voices and more likes.

Terry: Would you say that Cyber Civics™ and its curriculum is based on a fundamental optimism about the power of online technology?

Diana: Definitely. I mean, it's all about, my ultimate goal after the three-year program—I always tell the kids, "Be like Superman. Use your online powers for good and create networks of people that inspire you and that you inspire, and stand up for others. Use your voice to make the world better." I mean, wow—what kid isn't inspired with that power?

Terry: That's great. I mean, empowering them to share the good and the productive ideas.

Diana: Right. Again, as I mentioned, they have a powerful incentive to do that. Because it goes towards their digital reputation, which they're just forming, which is very important to their future.

Terry: Do you speak to digital reputation and how a profile builds in Cyber Civics™? I mean, is that a point that you stress especially, with a particular emphasis?

Diana: Oh, yeah. We do that in sixth grade in a whole block. I just did that lesson with some sixth graders last Friday. The way we do it is that we pretend like we're going to hire a couple candidates to work at their school. So we look at their very nice cover letters. Then, in order to determine who to hire, the kids take a look at their digital background. This is all fake, of course. But a lot of times the kids are so into the activity, they forget that it's all pretend. But we take a look at their Facebook page and Instagram posts, and news articles. They compare these two candidates to decide who it is they want to hire based on their digital background.

So it puts the kids in the driver's seat; it's really fun. They enjoy it a lot. As an employer, how would they make the decision? In almost every case when I've done this lesson with the kids, they were like, "Ooh, I don't want to hire either person, because that little thing appeared five years ago in their digital background."

Terry: What a great way to underscore, I mean, to put them in that decision-maker seat and to say, "Here's what you're given to go on."

Diana: Right.

Terry: "How do you make the most informed decision? Can you trust what you see?" I mean, hmm. Just out of curiosity, and this recent news out of Chicago, and that Facebook incident in Chicago, has that come up in your classroom?

Diana: Which Facebook—I don't know that I'm familiar with it.

Terry: Well, there was a person with a disability who was abused for a very long time [and the perpetrators broadcast it live on Facebook] . . .

Diana: Oh, God. Yeah.

Terry: Yeah.

Diana: That was horrible.

Terry: Yeah.

Diana: I did not bring that up, because of the age of the kids.

Terry: I see.

Diana: I probably could've with the eighth graders. But with the sixth, I wouldn't.

Terry: I see.

Diana: Yeah. They see enough negativity as it is. But yeah, that was horrible.

Terry: Clearly, I'm just thinking as someone teaching Cyber Civics™ and to show off the negative potency of something like a live Facebook feed.

Diana: Yeah.

Terry: I mean, if that doesn't underscore the timeliness of understanding or getting this curriculum into schools, then I don't know what quite would be as stark an example that we need that known.

Diana: It's like there's examples every day, and that's why—I mean, it's crazy to me that every school isn't making this a priority. Because again, when things like that happen, it's so easy to preempt with a little bit of effort on our part as adults, to make time to teach kids about this powerful tool that we put in their hands often way too young.

Terry: You have on your website, CyberWise, a free download that might speak to exactly this, a Parent's Guide to Digital Literacy.

Diana: Right.

Terry: Could you talk about the contents of that resource? It seems especially pertinent at this point in our discussion, and talk about how it would be useful to parents.

Diana: Right. Well, we have a couple freebies. When parents go to Cyber Wise, which is cyberwise.org, and sign up for our newsletter, they immediately get the Parent's Guide to Digital Literacy. It really covers all the basics of how to be a digital parent and what kids need to know, what they need from us. It's real handy. Then, when someone goes to the Cyber Civics™ website, which is cybercivics.com, we give away a couple free lessons that parents or teachers can do with their students to kind of give them an idea of the kind of lessons that we do in the classroom.

Terry: Oh, excellent. Excellent.

Diana: Yeah.

Terry: Well, we'll be sure and highlight those links on the printed page—

Diana: Oh, great.

Terry: —for the podcast. I have a last question here that I took from your journal article, "New Media Literacy Education: A Developmental Approach" that you wrote for the National Association for Media Literacy Education's *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, I believe.

Diana: Lots of words there, huh?

Terry: That's a mouthful, indeed. But the thought is really a lot simpler, and you write, "Ethical thinking is the skill du jour." Explain that. It's a really provocative sentence.

Diana: Well, it's something that I really touch on quite a bit when I talk to a lot of parent groups at schools. What I always tells parents is "I think a lot of these problems that we see online

would disappear if we simply respected age limits on social media networks." There's a big reason for that. Number one, it's a law. There's a law called COPPA, which is the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, which protects children under 13 from advertisers. So you have to be 13 to use most social networks.

But number two is it's a developmental thing. I mean, it takes children up to 13 years of life to develop the cognitive capacities to do abstract thinking. Abstract thinking is the prerequisite to ethical thinking. So these mistakes kids make, being mean, uploading stupid pictures, passing around things they shouldn't, a lot of that stuff happens because they're too young to understand the implications of their actions.

So I'm always surprised and perplexed when parents will give a nine-year-old a cellphone with unlimited access, and then they're like, "Oh, my god. I can't believe my daughter did that," or "my son did that." It's not the child's fault, because they really don't have that brain power to think ethically. When you think about it, everything we do online almost requires ethical thought. "Do I upload a photo that's unflattering to my friend? Do I download music that I don't have the rights to? Do I plagiarize? Do I copy and paste?"

Terry: Right.

Diana: All of that's ethical thought, and it really takes children a long while to develop the capacity to be good ethical thinkers.

Terry: And now they have so much more latitude and access to break those ethical boundaries that they perhaps have not been educated on yet.

Diana: Oh, yeah. Totally. Then, when they break them, it comes back to bite them years later, because it never goes away.

Terry: Mm-hmm. That's a message I think parents would do well to understand as a key component of digital literacy.

Diana: Right.

Terry: Also, I mean, just to really champion that for a second—to take that ethical thinking into your day-to-day living with people that are around you, how much better you will be informed when the actual human being in a social situation includes living, breathing people. I mean, the urgency and the applicability of it will seem to be more apparent to the kids after they've had this sort of education and ethical thinking.

Diana: Right. It makes me think of a young man that graduated last year out of eighth grade, and I had him talking to some teachers about Cyber Civics™. He said, "Well, I don't feel like I was learning digital skills as much as I was just learning life skills."

Terry: Ah.

Diana: I think that says it best. These are life skills that kids need in a digital age, and they're indispensable.

Terry: That is a terrific and very concise final thought, Diana. Unless there's something else you would like to leave us with?

Diana: No. I mean, it's great. I think the work that you guys do is so important, and I'm very honored to blog for you. So thank you.

Terry: Oh, we're very grateful to have you today. My guest today has been Diana Graber. She is a recognized expert on digital literacy, and you can find links to her sites: Cyber Civics™ and CyberWise. Thank you, Diana.

Diana: Oh, you're so welcome. Thank you for having me.

Terry: Oh, you're welcome, and thank you all for listening.