On Formspring, an E-Vite to Insults and Crude Queries - NYTimes.com

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As teenagers have always done, they want the attention, so they post it. And who knows what they’re getting that’s so devastating they don’t post it?

Some young Formspring users say it is precisely the negative comments that interest them. Users can choose not to accept anonymous questions, but most young people seem to ignore that option. And some Formspring users say it is precisely the negative comments that interest them.

For more information please visit: Formspring.me

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To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, young formspring users have been demoralized by comments on Honesty Box, a Facebook add-on. And Juicy Campus, a college gossip site, caused so much grief that some colleges blocked it, and some state attorneys general began consumer-protection investigations. The site shut down last year.

According to Formspring, more than three million questions have been asked and answered on the site. Mr. Ohno said in an e-mail message that the company did not know what percentage of users were teenagers. Many families on Long Island became aware of Formspring after the March suicide of Alexis Pilkington, a 17-year-old West Islip soccer player who had received many nasty messages.

Many schools say they have seen students crushed by criticism of their breasts, their body odor or their behavior. "The comments are all gross and sexual," the mother said. "And yet, of course, this is coming from her friends. I wish I could just erase it, but all of her friends are online, and so much of their social interaction is online that I don’t think I could just take away her Internet access. But I do think this whole online social media thing is a huge experiment on our children."

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When Formspring users say they strive for a light touch in answering questions about their relationships — "It’s just shocking that kids have access to all these things on the Internet and we don’t even know about it," Mr. Stern said. "And it’s disturbing that what goes on there will influence how somebody behaves. How do you block it? How do you monitor it?"

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May 5, 2010

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