Blog *your* Kids!

Click!!

Click!!

More and more parents are blogging their kids. Some are even blogging as their children. What makes these parents tick? *Peter Lim* finds out.

Click!!

Click!!

Since Linus Mark was born, I had faithfully kept a monthly journal in the form of letters to him, describing how he had grown over the previous month and recording the occasions or events that were special to our family… until the day I discovered the wonders of blogging!

The word "blog" is derived from the term "web log", and typically includes text, photos and video clips. Many blogs allow interactive posting of comments, and links to other web pages or blogs. Anyone can blog about anything: be it school, work, travel, food, fashion, politics or news. These days, blogs are commonly used as online diaries.

If you can't Beat them, Join them!

The statistics for blogging are as staggering as they are different. According to The Scientist magazine, there are nine million blogs in cyberspace and one more born every 7.4 seconds. David Sifry's "State of the Blogsphere" (October 2006), however, estimates there are at least 57 million blogs with an average of 100,000 new blogs created each day.

While it is true that many young people blog, blogging has gained popularity among the more matured population.

One of my New Year resolutions was to start a blog for Linus Mark, as though it were him blogging. I wanted to put myself into his world and see things from his perspective. So with the help of some 20-somethings from church who are more tech-savvy and have their own blogs, *LINUS on the MARK* (or LotM for short - *www. onthemark2046.blogspot.com*) was born! I was amazed at how simple it was to create the blog – in a matter of minutes, the blog was born, complete with interactive tagging and picture posts! Over time, I also

learnt how to post videos.

Browsing through several parenting blogs, I noticed that while many parents blog about their kids, not many (such as myself) blog as their kids.

As a Way to Remember

First Years (www.dnjnc.blogspot. com) is another example of a blog written from the child's perspective. Dennis Yeo, father to four-year-old Chloe, started the blog in April 2005 "largely by mistake", as written on the blog's header. The mistake was that he realised he should have started the blog earlier!

Linus Mark blogging on the computer.

5 Tips on Blogging Safely

From Linda McCarthy, author of *Own Your Space: Keep Yourself and Your Stuff Safe Online*, and senior director of Internet safety office, Symantec.

✔ **Ensure Online Securities**

Install an up-to-date security suite with a valid subscription that has antivirus, Internet security, firewall and anti-phishing features.

✔ **Manage your passwords by not using obvious ones:**

- Mix characters, numbers and symbols like &*%
- Change passwords regularly
- Don't use the same passwords for multiple accounts

✔ **Blog with Integrity**

Always remember that your blog is public. This means you should maintain your integrity on several levels and publish information you know to be true. Don't post anything you wouldn't be comfortable sharing with your neighbour next door!

✔ **Don't Give out Personal Info formation**

For your own safety and protection, do not give out personal information like your full name, identity number, email, home address or the full names of your friends or acquaintances.

✔ **Blogs may Outlive You**

Never forget that your blog entries may very well outlive you. Before you post something, ask yourself how you'll feel about that entry next month or next year. Or well into the next decade!

Dennis explained, "Chloe was already two-and-a-half years old when I started the blog. She was growing up so fast that we could not even remember what she was like a few weeks before! Also, she was becoming more talkative and playful, saying and doing so many things that we knew we would forget if we did not record or archive it in some way."

The main objective of the blog is to allow Chloe to remember the first years of her life when she grows up. Meant mainly for family friends and eventually Chloe herself when she learns to read,

First Years began with mainly text postings, but as of last year, Dennis started to post pictures of Chloe's drawings, her new bedroom, and memorable places and events. Although one advice he has for new parent-bloggers is

Leonny & family

"add photos so you can see how your kid has changed", Dennis has consciously shied away from posting pictures of the family or even Chloe, declaring themselves "camera-shy".

There is no particular topic that Dennis blogs about, just "anything we can remember, and anytime we can find time to blog it." As both Dennis and his wife Jacqueline are working parents, finding time to blog is a challenge. "But we try to capture some of the 'intellectual' conversations we have had with Chloe, and some of the moments we want to remember," he adds.

A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

An interesting and visually captivating blog I came across is *Our Everyday Things* (*www.oureverydaythings.com*). Leonny Atmadja, a part-time graphic designer who works from home, blogs about "the everyday things that happen: my kids, what I do with them, and how I go through and learn from difficult situations as a mother."

Leonny shares parenting tips and activity ideas, and also uses the blog to emphasise the importance of educating and disciplining children. The blog contains many photos of her two kids, three-year-old Lavinia and eight-month-old Levi, mostly taken by her, although her husband is a professional photographer.

There are also glimpses into her personal beliefs, values and philosophy in life. In fact, people have told her that the blog has inspired them, apart from starting their own blogs, into thinking about having children!

"You must have the 'passion' for blogging, then you will make

Chloe, as seen on her blog!

time for it no matter how busy you are," says the chirpy mother. "My passion is to share with the world the beauty of our family's everyday life – that is what keeps me blogging regularly for the past few years!"

Starting your own Blog

If you are inspired and want to start your own blog, here are some tips from these experienced parent-bloggers:

Consult someone who already has an active blog – this is often the best way to start. If you cannot find a peer who has a blog, ask any teenager or twenty-something: chances are that they have been blogging for a while.

Many developer-hosted software services such as Blogger or Wordpress make starting a blog easy with simple steps to follow. Blogger, for example, helps you to "create a blog in three simple steps," while Wordpress promises you

can "start a blog in seconds." All true, of course! Or you may choose to buy your own domain name, as Leonny did.

"If you are not into writing, you can start by posting photos of your child with captions," suggested Leonny. "People generally love looking at photos of kids, especially if they do not have much time to read the blog." One snag is that posting photos on blogs can be very time-consuming, as it has to be uploaded one at a time. An alternative is to post on sites such as flickr, MySpace or Multiply.

Update the blog regularly to encourage return visits, unless you don't really care whether people visit or not! The recommended practice is to update the blog at least three times a week (yes, and still find time to be a parent!).

Blogging is a fantastic way to keep in touch with family and friends, especially those you seldom meet or who are overseas. Also, typing into a computer certainly beats the traditional writing into a journal – both in terms of efficiency and speed. Once you get the hang of it, blogging can be a lot of fun! So, what are you waiting for? Go blog your kids!

Peter Lim is the author of "Little Miracles – The Journey to Parenthood" and a Board member of "I Love Children" charity.

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