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Tips on helping children and young people navigate the online world safely and positively

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1 Online social worlds

Remember that young people's online and offline social worlds are often enmeshed and cannot be easily separated.

- **Promote the benefits that technology can bring to relationships** and recognise that this might be the primary way that young people communicate with each other, for example, through Snapchat and WhatsApp messaging.

- **There may be social pressures to engage in sexualised behaviours online within relationships which could be problematic or illegal online**, but if they were engaged in offline this would be considered normative and fine. For example, sending nude images might be considered by young people to be normal, but being in possession of or sending any nude pictures of anyone under the age of 18 is illegal. Talk about these issues with young people and make sure they are aware of the law and the consequences.

See resources

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2 Online behaviour

To prevent negative behaviours online, it is important to teach your child how to be kind online in all sorts of scenarios. Key messages for your child could include:

- **Don't join in just to fit in.**

- **What you say online can really hurt someone**, or make the person feel good.

- **Watch out for your friends**, and stand up for them online just like you would offline.

- **Don't reply to a message from someone if you don't want to.**

- **You deserve to feel safe online.** Talk to someone you trust if you are worried about something done or said online, or it just seems weird.

- **It is your right to take a break from online communications** – it'll all be there still when you choose to tune back in.

- **Discuss the following topics with your child:**
  - Why are people more unkind online – is it because they don't see the reaction?
  - How can we create a kinder community?
  - What do you think is appropriate behaviour online?

See resources

3 Be curious about your child's world

Be curious about who is in your child's online world, in the same way you are curious about who they spend time with offline.

- **Ask your child about who they are chatting to.**

- **Who do they feel good after talking to?**

- **Who leaves them feeling down?**

- **How do they decide who to talk to and what would they do if they don't want to talk to someone?**

- **Are they having any problems with friends online that they'd like some advice on?**

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4 Help them make good choices

Help your child know they have a choice about who they talk to, and they can change their mind. If things get weird or speaking someone doesn't make them feel good, they have a right to distance themselves. Talk to your child about their options, and help then recognise how they can exercise their choice about who they connect with online. Even when the other person seemed to be really friendly to begin with.

- **Sometimes this is about leaving a specific conversation.**

- **Sometimes this is about reducing how much they talk to that person.**

- **Sometimes this is about "unfollowing" or "unfriending" someone.**

- **Sometimes this is about "blocking" someone.**

- **Or muting a conversation so you don't see what they say.**

See resources

5 Keeping all lines of communication open

It is important to keep lines of communication open with your children, and make sure they know they can come to you with their worries. However, this can sometimes feel too hard. Talk to your child about where else they could go for help and support. Do they have other trusted adults they could talk to? Do they know about the organisations that are there for them? Show them the **Childline** or **Kooth** websites, so they know where they are if they need them.

- **If you or your child are worried about something that has been said through social media,** they can report the person or post to the social media platform. Ask them what sort of thing they might want to report in the future.

- **Ask your children if they know how to report something on social media.** If they say yes, get them to show you, if not then its an opportunity to learn together. For a 'how to' guide for different websites, check out this information on **Thinkuknow**.

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5 Making a report

CEOP help and give you advice and you or your child can make a report directly to them if something has happened online which has made them feel unsafe, scared or worried. This might be from someone they know in real life, or someone they have only ever met online. They take all reports seriously and we will do everything they can to keep you safe. Some of the things children and young people have reported to CEOP include:

- Someone online has asked me to send them nude images

- I shared a nude image with someone online and they are threatening me

- I did something that I was embarrassed about on webcam and someone has turned nasty towards me

- Someone I don't know is asking me to live-stream and do things I don't want to do

- Someone online kept asking me to meet them face-to-face and I feel pressured by them

- Someone online was talking to me about sex and it made me feel uncomfortable

- Someone online is putting pressure on me to do things I don't want to do

- Someone I met in an online game keeps trying to talk to me privately

As well as making a report, the CEOP Thinkuknow website has information and advice to help if something has happened to your child online.

Anyone can report a suspected online sexual abuse images to the Internet Watch Foundation. Make sure your child knows they can do this, if they come across a sexual image where it looks like someone in the image is under 18.

THINK U KNOW

See resources

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