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Online Safety Newsletter
May 2024

Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying? Cyberbullying is bullying online and can take many forms such as sending malicious messages, leaving nasty comments, excluding somebody from a group chat, blackmailing or setting up a fake profile. Cyberbullying can take place across many different platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and on games such as Roblox and Minecraft.

What should I do if my child is being bullied online? If your child is being bullied, then try to stay calm and let them know that it is not their fault. It is always useful to keep evidence of any online bullying and inform their school so that they are aware. Show your child how to block and/or report any users/content and review their privacy settings to limit what others can see. You may also wish to set up any parental controls that are available.

Further information

- https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/online-bullying/
- https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html
- https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with/life/bullying/

Group Chats

Group Chats are available on various messaging apps, social media apps and in some games. When your child is part of these groups, they may not know all the other members and it may even include people that they have previously blocked. Your child may come across inappropriate content and bullying can take place within these groups. Talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with kindness, like they would if they were face-to-face. https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/

Online Strangers

Do you really know who your child is talking to? There are many apps/websites where your child may come across strangers contacting them. Some platforms will allow you to set who can contact your child as well as switch off communication so ensure appropriate settings are explored and set up. This article from ThinkUKnow explains how to protect your child from strangers: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-your-child/Online-contact-and-staying-safe/

Online Challenges

Our children may not have developed the skills and ability to critically analyse all situations yet so it is important to talk to your child about hoaxes and challenges that may appear on the internet. Some challenges are fun and provide no risk, however there will be challenges that are risky/dangerous. Just recently, a child sadly died after participating in a challenge - more information here: https://ineqe.com/2024/03/19/dangerous-challenge-safeguarding-risks/

Your child may see others complete certain challenges online without being harmed and therefore may want to repeat them and not consider the potential risks to themselves. Make sure they know that they should talk to you (or another trusted adult) about what they see online, particularly if they plan to try a challenge.

We would always advise that if your child has not heard about an online challenge, then do not draw attention to it as this may lead to them searching for it out of curiosity, so just talk about challenges in a general sense. Furthermore, reassure your child that challenges that suggest that terrible things will happen if they do not complete the tasks are not real.

The following link will provide you with further information as well as content to help you talk to your child: https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/advice-for-parents/tackling-the-hard-stuff-on-social-media-to-support-young-people/online-challenges-are-they-harmless/

TikTok have also produced this resource to help you talk to your child about challenges and the potential risks: https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en-sg/online-challenges

Poppy Playtime

It is important that you are aware that whilst the name and characters suggest a playful game, it is a survival horror game with graphics that may not be suitable for your child. It includes characters such as 'Kissy Wissy' and 'Huggy Wuggy.' Please view this game before allowing your child to play it as it may not be appropriate for them – particularly young children. Children may be playing the game or just watching videos of it on sites such as YouTube or playing replicated versions on Roblox for example.

Further information: Safer Schools NI have produced this informative guide - https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/huggywuggy-online-safety-review/

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