Learner Manual for Parents and Guardians

Safe Use of Social Media

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1 Safe Use of Social Media

Aims of this Unit:
1. To explore ways of helping children and young people enjoy and use social media whilst remaining safe
2. To identify ways of dealing with potential social media issues and problems

1.1 Overview of this Unit

Most children use social media every day. They use it as an educational tool, as a way of keeping in touch with friends and family and as a form of entertainment. Social media can help young people express their creativity, understand the world outside their own communities and take action on issues they feel strongly about e.g. the environment.

Parents and carers also use social media but often not as much as their children and often do not feel well enough equipped to help their children use social media safely. This unit is designed to help parents to support their children to use social media in a responsible and secure way.

1.2 Positives and Negatives of Social Media Use for Young Children

Social media provides a great platform for many things but unfortunately there is a negative side too.

Positives +	Negatives -
It plays an important role in maintaining and building family relationships	It can make children vulnerable to cyber bullying;
It is an outlet for creativity	It can be linked to recruitment to gangs, terrorism and grooming
It provides a platform for keeping in touch with friends	It can lead children to inadvertently access inappropriate material
It opens up the wider world	There may be a link to mental illness and depression
It can be used to access many forms of support e.g. for mental health problems	There is a risk of 'addiction' – child constantly checking apps for social media updates
It can help people meet other people like them	It can lead to a reduction in 'real' time interaction with others
It can help with learning	It can lead to a reduction in time spent on physical activity

It can help people to understand different points of view	It can lead to social isolation
Children need ICT skills for their future careers , it helps to exercise those skills	It can affect sleep
Social media provides them with opportunities to connect with others for children who find it difficult to access the wider world	It can lead to fear of missing out (FOMO)
It can provide children with different ways of campaigning for social good	It can lead to negative self-image as users compare themselves to others
It can help children to build up a digital profile showcasing their achievements which will help them to access education and work	It can lead to young people believing false information
It can be a good source of fun and entertainment	It can lead to young people inadvertently sharing too much personal information e.g. school badge logo in photos, location of home, private family photos
It can give people exposure to more languages and cultures	Some young people can behave or take/share inappropriate photos/videos to please their followers to gain more 'likes' which is often the chosen purpose of Instagram, Facebook and TikTok

Use this space to record gaming sites you have explored with your child. Write down any thoughts you have. What did you find positive or negative from the experience?

Name of game/site	Comments

1.3 How to Help Young People Spot Fake News

1. What is the story about? Could it be an advert or even a joke? Can you find this information on other websites? If you can, is the story the same or is it reported differently?

2. How does this story make you feel? Fake news tries to appeal to your emotions so that you read the story. If you have a strong reaction to it be careful. Check the story out before sharing it.

3. Are photos manipulated or photoshopped? Are the photos really photos of something quite different? Find out how to do a reverse image search. It is easy and fun.

4. Who has written this story? At the top of the story you can see the URL. Check the address. Most reliable URLs end in .com, .co.uk, .net, .gov, .org, .mil, or .edu. If it does not end in one of these it could be fake. Check it out carefully.

5. Remember that even celebrities and friends can get it wrong and can share fake news.

> For more information and a useful video for parents visit:
> - https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zmvdd6f

1.4 Screentime

Screen time means the time spent using a device such as a television, tablet, mobile phone or a games console. With more advanced technology children and adults are spending more time on screens than ever before. Although there are benefits to using these modern devices, for example keeping in touch with friends and family or learning new things, we should try to limit our screen time.

Children need to hear sounds, watch faces and interact with others to learn to talk. They learn that turn taking interaction builds conversations. Screen time does not provide this opportunity for development.

Sharing books together is a great way to interact with your child and to encourage language development. Your child learns new words with you, watches and hears the sounds you say and enjoys the attention.

Avoid too much screen time yourself as your child will likely copy. You could leave all devices off for meal times and bed time or leave them in another room to set limits and lead by example.
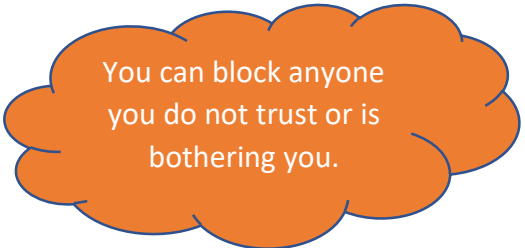
Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from their phone. Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device. Find alternative things to do and new routines like going for a short walk together or playing board games. Follow their interests.

Children can be quite insistent on using their screens if it is a habit they are used to. Sometimes as a parent it feels like an easy option to keep them entertained whilst we are busy, but unfortunately long periods of screen time could have a physical effect on their development (i.e. eyes, brain), sleep cycle and behaviour. A healthy balance is needed. Setting limits for ourselves and families has many benefits.

HEALTH @HOME

Parent Tip Sheet: Staying Safe Online

It is important to make sure your child is using social media appropriately and is aware of how to stay safe online.

Speaking openly with your child about online safety and agreeing rules together will help your child to be protected online. It will also reassure them that they can have honest discussions with you if they are unsure of something or a situation arises that worries them.

> You can block anyone you do not trust or is bothering you.

- Check and set up privacy settings together on social media platforms. Make sure you and your child understand who can view what they share.
- Talk to your child about appropriate content to share. Discuss the implications inappropriate photos can have. A helpful question is: "Would you show this photo or video to your grandma?"
- Turn off location settings so people cannot identify where you live.
- Talk to your child about sharing photos that show their personal life e.g. number plate on family car, siblings or friends who do not want their photos shared, etc. Get them to think about why it is not a good idea to share such information in a public place.
- Often, social media platforms are about how many 'followers' and 'likes' you get for a post. It is a trend that often means children allow people they don't know to view their profile and comment on their posts or become gaming friends. Talk to your child about strangers and explain that some people online may not be who they say and can be a lot older than they say.
- Talk to your child about cyber bullying and what it means. Assure them that they can tell you or a trusted adult if they feel something upsets them and that you will be supportive and non-judgmental.
- Check they understand 'fake' profiles and suspicious scams. Explain that if they are unsure of something they can look it up on the internet. Often if an offer sounds too good to be true it is a scam.
- It is okay to 'spring clean' contacts and to regularly check who you are friends with and delete people you do not know or who are negative.
- Remind your child that what they share is permanent as it can be saved and shared by others.
- Never give out passwords. People can pretend to be you and post and say inappropriate things on your behalf.
- Talk to your child about what apps and social media they have and keep up to date as new ones come out all the time.

Activity: Reflection

This section is to help you think about what was covered in the unit, what you learnt, what you found interesting and what changes you might make as a result. Fill some of the sections in at the end of the unit then go back to it during the week especially when you have shared information with your children.

Fill in some of your thoughts below at the end of the session then add to it during the week.

Something I learnt today:

_____

_____

Something I found very interesting:

_____

_____

Something I'm not sure about:

_____

_____

Something I will do now:

_____

_____

Any other thoughts:

_____

_____

Related Health@Home Comics:

- Lucy Has a Nightmare
- Fake News
- The HIPHOP-App
- The Mean Avatar

Related Health@Home WebQuests:

- Tackling Fake News
- Creating our own Media Messages
- Finding and Understanding Information
- Why is Health Literacy Important?
- Prevention Is Better Than Cure
- How to Ask Embarrassing Questions
- Keen to Be Green
- Leave No Trace