Online Safety Tips for Parents and Carers

As children head back to school with new devices, elements of online learning and new challenges, it's important to give them the tools they need to make positive choices online.

The below tips can help support your child to stay safe when it comes to online bullying.

Online bullying is a real risk for children and young people, whilst there are some characteristics that distinguish it from 'in person' bullying, essentially we have to remember that **online** is "**where**" the behaviour is being carried out.

So what can be done to prevent bullying and respond to it, particularly when it takes place online?

Take Interest:

Take an active interest in where children and young people go online, in the same way as if they were going to a physical place. Who are they spending time with? Are there safeguards in place? Parental controls, location settings etc. This isn't "prying" into their digital life, it's about engagement and building trust. This enables better placement to intervene, and children and young people are more likely to be comfortable to confide if problems arise.

Connect not Disconnect:

When things go wrong, a natural response might be to take away the technology – disconnect the internet, take away a smart phone or delete an app or remove a game. However, this is only a short-term solution, if that, and doesn't address the bullying behaviour and the impact it's having. It's important to connect, the conversations and relationships you have with children and young people are vital at these moments and can help to understand the problem and what they want to happen next, these conversations can also help them regain a sense of control in their lives.

Listen:

Children and young people involved in bullying others online often don't understand the impact of their actions. A natural parental response to this situation is to be angry or upset. But it's vital to take the time to listen, explore why they've behaved in that way, and help them to understand the impact of their behaviour. All behaviour communicates feeling, and bullying is no different.

Don't Panic:

Remaining calm supports good listening and is reassuring for children.

What do they want to do, and What do they want you to do?

Exploring this will help your child feel valued and will help you to understand what support they need.

Give Your Full Attention:

This is reassuring and shows you are taking them seriously. Explain the reasons for your concern. Feeding back sensitively about what you have noticed can help your child to see more clearly how bullying is impacting on them.

Talk to Children about Spending Hours Online:

Talk about online relationships and how they make them feel. Establish a clear understanding of the sites they use, the games they play, how they access them and agree boundaries.

Keep Listening

It's important to remind children and young people that adults in their lives are always available to listen and they can talk to them at any time. This can help with initial reluctance. Keep lines of communication open and remember that the impact of bullying can last, even if the behaviour has stopped.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MAY BE EXPERIENCING BULLYING ONLINE

• They become quiet, anxious or easily upset
• There's an increase in the number of notifications they receive on their phone
• They immediately delete notifications
• They start spending more or less time on their phone/laptop/gaming
• They ask for help to block accounts or delete posts
• They appear nervous or upset when they receive a notification on their phone
• They spend more time in their room or withdraw from social activities

ADVICE FOR YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT ONLINE BULLYING

How we Treat Others:

Online relationships are no different from relationships offline. Treat people online with the same respect as we would if they were sitting in the same room. Our behaviour online should mirror how we treat people day to day. Often young people act in a different way online, underestimating how permanent online posts can be. A good rule is, if you wouldn't say it to the person sitting in front of you; don't say it to them online either.

Different Communication:

Communication online is different to in person. We don't have the benefit of being able to read gestures, facial expressions and we can't distinguish tone of voice, this makes online messages easy to misinterpret. What we mean to say and how others interpret it can be very different. Due to this we need to be more aware of the impact comments could potentially have.

Digital Footprint:

Be mindful of your digital footprint. The online world is a public space and we all have a digital footprint within it. If our digital footprint gives others a bad impression it can have lasting consequences into later life when it comes to college, university and job applications.

Further Information:

For more information check out the Safer Schools Scotland guides to Having Supportive Conversations and Conversation Starters Guide.

Protecting People in Moray

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keep **chatting** online

keep **learning** online

keep **safe** online