

EXPLORING IDENTITY ONLINE

“It’s almost as if you can’t be who you are. In an ideal world I’d be a person who would like anything without someone having an opinion on it. But you can’t. You have to like certain things; you have to be a certain way or you’re just going to get negativity from all people.”

- STUDENT, AGE 15

Research conducted by The Diana Award in partnership with ASKfm and psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos in 2018 has highlighted the pressure teens face online at a critical time when they are exploring and developing their identity. Despite being able to talk to more people than ever before, online judgement and pressure to fit in with a vast number of people can limit young people’s ability to be themselves online.

Research commissioned by The Diana Award and carried out by independent third-party research supplier YouGov (February 2018) revealed the following trends:

63%

of young people age 13-17 believe people behave differently online to the way they do offline

25%

have felt they had to ‘like’ a post or picture they don’t actually like

50%

have felt pressured to reply to people’s messages quickly

GROWING UP ONLINE_

During childhood and adolescence, young people begin to discover who they are, develop their identity and learn from their mistakes. When this process is taken online, the amount of people who have an influence on how young people feel about themselves can grow from just a small circle of friends and family to a potentially huge pool of thousands of online friends and followers.

THE IMPACT_

When used safely, social media provides great opportunities to connect with like-minded peers. However, it can also be daunting to interact with so many people online. For young people who are developing their identity, their online interactions such as seeing how others look or behave in order to get ‘likes’ or more followers, can make them feel pressure to fit in. As a result, young people may be prevented from fully expressing themselves and achieving their potential.

WHAT TO DO?

How can you help your child explore their identity and resist online pressure?

EXPLORE TOGETHER_

It’s a good idea to ask your child to explain the social media sites they use and look at them together. Explore using these apps yourself so that you understand how they work. Don’t worry if you don’t fully understand the platforms your child uses. You can still talk to them about the issues they might be facing online such as pressure to conform or encountering negativity.

CHECK IN REGULARLY_

Talking about the online world with your child doesn’t have to be a big or scary conversation. Instead, build in regular opportunities to discuss how your child experiences and feels about being online – you could build this into dinner times or car journeys, for example.

Questions you may like to explore together include: have they ever felt pressured to post or be constantly connected? Do they feel expected to look or behave a certain way to

get more likes? How would they feel if they didn’t get any likes on something they post? Check in with them often and consistently. Remind your child that lots of social networking sites have age limits (usually 13+). They should make sure they respect the terms of use and register with the correct age.

ENCOURAGE_

Encourage them to remember the positive qualities that make them unique outside of the online world. What are their strengths, characteristics, hobbies and achievements?

DIGITAL BREAK_

Help your child take a digital break by doing something that they enjoy offline like going to the park, baking a cake, making a pizza or going for a bike ride. Don’t feel tempted to take away your child’s phone or device – it’s more important to help them develop the resilience they need to tackle issues themselves online.

In partnership with:

ASKfm



FROM THE DIANA AWARD

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

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