Supporting children with their online activity

Sarah Berman

Computing & Digital Literacy Advisory Teacher

CEOP Ambassador

What are your concerns about your children being online?

- amount of time spent online
- access to inappropriate content
- content around forever
- less time with real life experience
- cyberbullying
- contact with strangers
- impact on emotional wellbeing

What we know for sure

How much they use matters

Teens who use the most digital media are the most unhappy.

What they're using it for matters.

Teens who use social media passively or only to get likes and follows have the most negative outcomes.

Other factors might matter more.

Overall media balance, sleep, general health, and other factors play a huge role in mental health.

Preventative rather than reactive

- Online safety sat in Computing curriculum – much focus on privacy settings

- New compulsory R(S)E component of PSHE curriculum;

"Today's children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way. "

The developing brain

- prefrontal cortex helps us think ahead, see consequences, and make decisions

- teens' prefrontal cortex isn't finished developing

- they are more likely to see situations as absolute truths that will last forever

- younger teens develop meta-cognitive abilities and awareness of others' opinions of them

Comparison, pressure, drama

The teen brain is already prone to feel vulnerable around what others think, the way they use social media can definitely impact how they feel about themselves

What changes are year 6s facing?

- transition from primary to secondary – exciting but can be challenging
- navigating new and old friendships
- sudden new independence – in school; organisation, at home; journeys, keys, no childcare arrangements
- SATs and exam pressure
- puberty

'Life in Likes' report

- report on the effects of social media on 8-to-12-year-olds - fills a gap in research showing how younger children use platforms which are not designed for them

- while 8-10s use social media in playful, creative way - this changes significantly as children's social circles expand - many y7 children are finding social media hard to manage and becoming over-dependent on 'likes' and 'comments' for social validation

- 'sharenting'

The world has changed

It is not so simple
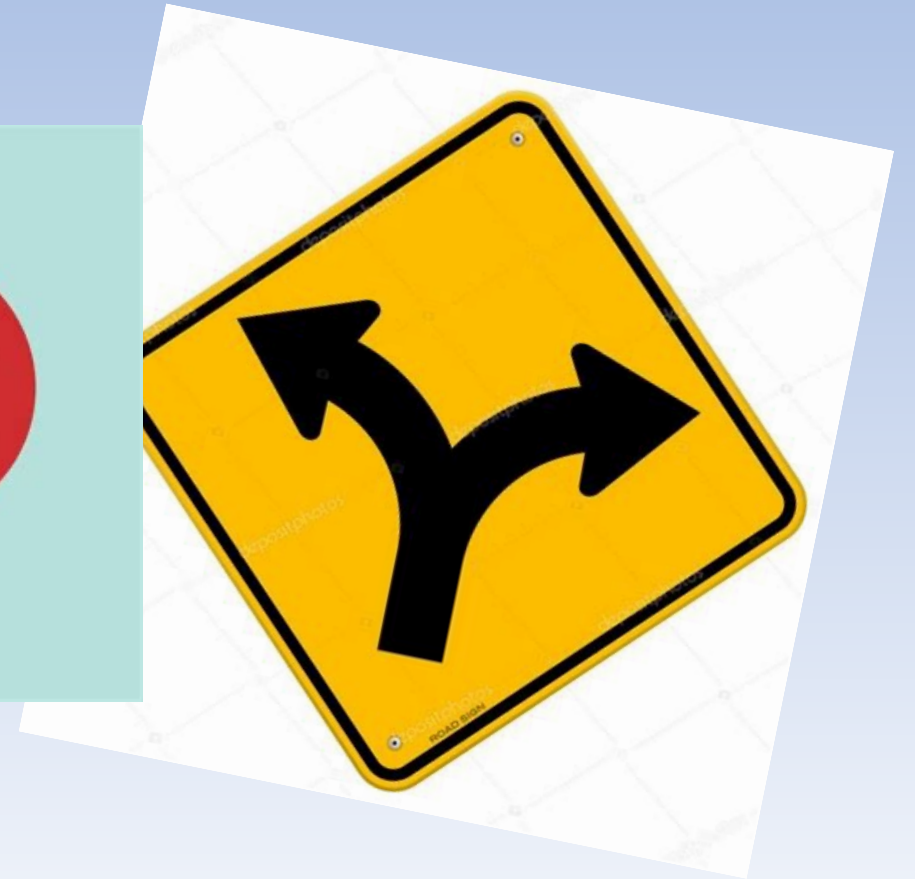
Let's get talking – 10 top tips

1. Ask what they are using and why they enjoy it; be curious
2. Look together at resources from CEOP, NSPCC, Parent Zone, Childnet
3. Keep conversations open and neutral - more effective and comfortable and use examples of other people's behaviour as starting point for discussions

4. Question, challenge and debate the messages we are all exposed to

5. Help to develop good self-esteem, good social and coping skills and to encourage independence

6. Validate feelings but discuss why these should not be expressed online

7. What behaviour do you model? (Make sure all devices are switched off and out of bedroom at night – including yours!)

8. Look together at how much information people unwillingly expose about themselves, as examples – discuss audience, privacy and over sharing

9. Examples of the past are an easier way to appreciate how feelings change, rather than asking how they will feel in the future

10. Make sure your child knows they can turn to you for help and support

Respond with empathy

- Ask yourself "how would I feel if this was done to me?"

- Know that the pressure feels real

- Validation statements "I bet it feels hard to keep up with all of this."

- Encourage your child to take short breaks and discuss how they feel afterwards

- Set limits together "as a family, we're not using phones at the table or in bed."

How to enjoy social media whilst protecting your emotional wellbeing

- Help your child surround themselves with content that adds value to their life. Find people in fields they are interested in or accounts that share true and honest reflections of life; follow hashtags that share positive messages within the content they bring up

- Regularly review the accounts you are following, and talk to your child about why you do this

- Spend time curating an account so that the user sees a healthier, balanced and more inspiring reflection of life

- If someone you / your child follows is posting stuff which you / they do not like or which makes you /they feel low, anxious, angry or upset, you /they can mute them for a short period or consider /talk about whether you /they may wish to remove them altogether

Curate your feed
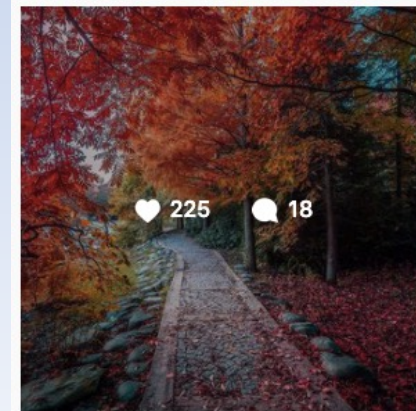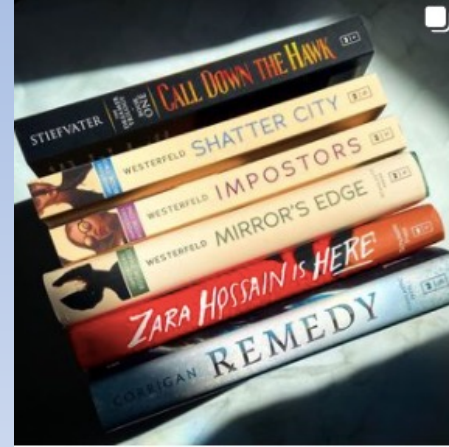
Resources

Common sense media

CEOP / CEOP YouTube channel

Internet Matters

NSPCC Online safety – Netaware, Parental controls

Ditch the Label

YoungMinds

The Female Lead