

EXPLORING IDENTITY ONLINE



FROM THE DIANA AWARD

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Research conducted by The Diana Award in partnership with ASKfm and psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos 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.



63%

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



50%

have felt pressured to reply to people's messages quickly



25%

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

"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

Growing up online

Childhood and adolescence is a time when we are discovering who we are, experimenting with our identity and learning from mistakes.

When this process is taken online, the amount of people who have an influence on how young people feel about themselves can go from just a small circle of friends and family to a potentially huge pool of thousands of online friends and followers.

THE IMPACT

Whilst social media brings amazing opportunities to connect, the amount of people giving us feedback online can be daunting. For young people trying to explore their identity, learning how they need to behave or look to get likes can lead to pressure to be the same as others. By conforming to who they need to be to be 'liked' by their online audience, 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

Discuss how the online world makes your child feel: 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.

