

Online Safety Newsletter

March 2024 Issue 10.



MERIDIAN COMMUNITY
PRIMARY SCHOOL
AND NURSERY
Learning for Life



Welcome to the latest online safety newsletter. We were asked by a parent to share some of the lessons we cover in school to support children with their online behaviour. Read on to find out more.

Supporting your children with upsetting content.

In this edition we've included a helpful guide to support parents and carers have conversations with their child if they have seen something online that has upset them. We appreciate it can be tricky to hear from your child if they are upset by something they have seen or witnessed online.

These would be the types of conversations we have if a child should share anything whilst in school that has upset them.



Online Safety at Meridian – it's in our curriculum!

Did you know online safety has its very own curriculum at Meridian? We take keeping children safe online very seriously. We thought you might be interested to know that in addition to the children's Computing topics we also teach lessons about online safety so they have lots of information about the ever-changing online world in which they are growing up in. Each term has its own theme listed as follows:

Unit 1: Self-image and identity

Unit 2: Online Relationships

Unit 3: Online Reputation

Unit 4: Online Bullying

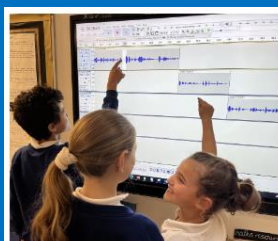
Unit 5: Managing online information

Unit 6: Health, well-being and lifestyle

Unit 7: Privacy & Security

Unit 8: Copyright & Ownership

A full copy of the curriculum overview can be found on our website.



Turn on the subtitles (TOTS) on your streaming services

Not strictly an online safety issue but we wanted to make our families aware of the following campaign to support with reading at home using streaming services such as Netflix and Disney+. Have you ever considered 'TOTS – turn on the subtitles?'. Research has shown that it can double the chance of your child leaving school as a proficient reader. You can turn them on for the whole family or most streaming services will now allow you to do it just for children's profiles. Perhaps you could try it for 5 minutes a day and then look to increase it if you notice it has a positive impact on their reading?

<https://turnonthesubtitles.org/parents/>



We're TOTS and we exist to improve children's literacy.

Get in touch!

Do you have a question or topic about online safety you'd like help with? Email the school office with 'Online Safety' in the subject and we'll do our best to include it in the next edition.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEAL WITH UPSETTING CONTENT

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Raising children in the digital age seems to be getting tougher, with the world currently experiencing so many uncertainties. From climate change to military conflicts around the globe, right now children across the globe can scarcely go online without being exposed to unsettling stories, images and ideas. Reassuring a concerned child can be difficult, especially when bad news feels omnipresent. We've put together some advice to help you in discussing upsetting events with young ones.

1 FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS

There are many ways that children are exposed to upsetting content in the media, both online and offline. Before swamping your child with information, find out what they know already. Show them you're interested in what they have to say, practice active listening and try to gauge how much your child has been impacted by what they've seen.



2 RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE

Starting a conversation about upsetting content probably isn't the best idea when your child is studying for an exam or about to go to bed. Choose a time when they're relaxed and open to talking, to make sure you have their full attention. Remember, these conversations can become emotional, so choose somewhere your child feels safe and comfortable.



3 KEEP IT AGE APPROPRIATE

With younger children, try and keep the conversation more general and avoid leading questions and complex detail. You can go slightly deeper into the specifics with young teenagers but keep monitoring their emotional response. With older teens, you can be more open about the realities and consequences of what's happening – but again, do stay aware of their emotional state.



4 EMPHASISE HOPE

Upsetting content can make anyone feel angry, scared, sad or overwhelmed. Try to find stories of hope, generosity and strength related to the content you're discussing. Children often feel reassured when they know they can do something to help, so encourage your child's sense of control through activities which make them feel they're positively impacting the events they're concerned about.



5 MONITOR REACTIONS

All children react differently, of course, and young people might not directly say that they're scared, angry, anxious, confused or uncomfortable. Emotional reactions are natural when discussing upsetting topics, so take note of your child's body language and reactions. Allow them to express their feelings in a non-judgmental space and try to stay mindful of how they might be feeling.



6 CONSIDER YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

It's not only young people who find upsetting news difficult to process: adults also have to deal with strong emotions in moments of stress. Children develop coping strategies by mirroring those around them, so staying on top of how you appear to be regulating your emotion on the outside is important for supporting your child through worrying times.



7 SET LIMITS

Managing screen-time and content can be difficult even in normal circumstances, but especially in unusual or stressful periods (at the start of the pandemic, for example). It's virtually impossible to keep children away from upsetting content completely, but it's important to try to limit exposure by using parental controls, talking about the dangers of harmful content and enforcing screen-time limits.



8 TAKE THINGS SLOWLY

Try not to overwhelm your child with information all at once: instead, take the discussion one step at a time. You could make the first conversation a simple introduction to a potentially upsetting subject and then wait until your child is ready to talk again. Opening the door to the conversation and demonstrating that your child can talk to you about this type of issue is a vital first step.



9 ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

Online, troubling images, posts, videos and stories are shared across multiple platforms, many of which your child might access. Even if the content is actually inappropriate, encourage your child to discuss what they saw instead of being angry at them for seeing it. Children are still learning that not everything online is accurate – you want to be their ultimate source of information, not their device.



10 FIND A BALANCE

There's often a tremendous compulsion to stay right up to date with events. Our phones frequently send us push notifications urging us to read the latest article or view the most recent video on social media. It's essential to remind your child that it's healthy to take regular breaks, and to focus on positive events instead of 'doomscrolling' and risking becoming overwhelmed by bad news.



11 BUILD RESILIENCE

News has never been more accessible. While our instinct may be to shield children from upsetting stories, it's important that they're equipped with the tools to manage this content when they are exposed to it. Talk about upsetting content more generally with your child and emphasise that they can always tell you or a trusted adult if something they see makes them feel uneasy.



12 IDENTIFY HELP

It's hugely important that children know where to find support if they encounter upsetting content online. Encourage them to open up to an adult that they trust, and make sure they're aware of who their trusted adults are. It is essential that children understand that they're not alone, and that help is available if and when they need it.



Meet Our Expert

Cayley Jorgensen is the director of FaceUp South Africa, which is a reporting system that is currently being used by schools and companies to fight bullying around the world. FaceUp helps give a voice to bystanders by encouraging them to speak up and get the help they not only want but need.



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#WakeUpWednesday

Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-5647806> | <https://www.childnet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/> | <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/how-talk-your-children-about-conflict-and-war>