



Conversation Menu

SOCIAL MEDIA & DISTRESSING IMAGES

APPETISER

Any child who uses social media is potentially exposed to content that is graphic or confronting. Knowing how to prepare your child for this, or how to respond to your child who has seen distressing content or been bullied online, can be a difficult conversation. Knowing what to say, and how, can help unlock a healthy discussion.



ENTREE

Whilst filtering tools help protect teens from viewing distressing images or videos, these are only surface-level solutions. There are ways around them. If you don't want your child accessing certain content, it's ultimately a parenting conversation. Keep checking in with your teenager to foster healthy and open discussion. This includes asking your child regularly about their online friends and interactions. But what's the best way to approach these conversations? By **planning** first. And **listening**.

Plan what to say, and how:

- **Environment:** Talking whilst doing an activity with your teenager can foster a more relaxed conversation. Consider going for a walk, a drive or cooking together.
- **Response:** If your teenager opens up about something they've seen, now is not the time to assign blame about how they came across the material.
- **Appreciate:** Thank your child for being open with you. This will foster future discussion.

Be a good listener:

- **Active listening skills:** Respond by nodding, paraphrasing and using appropriate, open body language so that your child feels heard.
- **Reassure:** Reassure your teenager that you are there to listen and offer support. Build the trust in your relationship so that they feel safe talking to you in the future.

MAIN

Conversation starters: What questions to ask

Do you really know what your child is viewing online and how it makes them feel? These questions can help start the conversation.

- Do you know if any cyber bullying goes on at your school?
- Have you been bullied online or seen it happen? How did it make you feel?
- Do you know what your friends think about sending nude photos? How do you feel about it?
- Do your peers talk about online pornography? What are your thoughts on it?
- Have you come across anything on the internet that has made you feel any negative emotions?

DESSERT

How to stay aware and involved

- Regularly co-view or co-play any games or apps your teenager is using
- Check that apps, sites and games your child is accessing are age-appropriate
- Use parental controls on devices to help limit what your child is exposed to
- Let your child know that not everything they see online is real or true
- Help your child report and block upsetting content
- Let them know they can come to you if they see anything upsetting online

LEFTOVERS

Further resources

- Talk to your child's school counsellor
- Contact the Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) or Parentline (1300 30 1300)
- Read books on the risks and dangers of the web
- Find educational videos about internet safety that your child can watch
- Ask a responsible adult, such as a friend, family member or teacher to help with the conversation
- Regularly visit the [eSafety Commissioner](#) and follow their social media accounts.

