

What Young People Are Seeing Online



Young people today spend a significant amount of time online through social media, video-sharing platforms, gaming communities, and group chats. These spaces can provide opportunities for connection, learning, creativity, and entertainment. However, they can also expose young people to content that is confronting, graphic, or emotionally distressing.

Many parents are surprised to learn that young people do not always seek out this type of content. Through algorithms, reposts, group chats, autoplay features, and recommendations, students may unexpectedly encounter videos or images involving violence, serious injuries, accidents, death, or other disturbing material.

While some young people quickly scroll past upsetting content, others may continue watching out of curiosity, peer influence, or a desire to understand what they have seen. Repeated exposure can affect emotional wellbeing and may contribute to feelings of anxiety, fear, sadness, difficulty sleeping, intrusive thoughts, or becoming desensitised to violence and suffering.

Some helpful questions might include:

- Have you come across anything online recently that upset or shocked you?
- What do you usually do when something online doesn't feel right?
- If you saw something disturbing, who could you talk to?
- How do you know when it's time to stop watching something?

It is also important to remind young people that they do not have to continue viewing upsetting content, share it with others, or manage it on their own. Encouraging them to close the content, report it where appropriate, and speak with a trusted adult can make a significant difference.

While we cannot control everything that appears online, we can help young people develop the confidence, critical thinking, and support networks they need to navigate digital spaces safely.

If you have concerns about your child's wellbeing or online experiences, please feel free to contact the Counselling Team.

Further Information

Parents and caregivers can access practical advice and resources through the Australian eSafety Commissioner:

www.esafety.gov.au