At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

LITTLE REMINDERS OF HOW TO BE KIND ONLINE

Online abuse can have a severe impact on people's lives and is often targeted at the most vulnerable. Cyberbullying has been shown to have psychological and emotional impact. In order for us to develop empathy for others we sometimes need to move away from fulfilling our own needs and think about the needs of others. This is sometimes more challenging online because we cannot see the person, connect with how they feel nor interact face to face.

This guide will help you to be more careful online and is suitable for any environment i.e. gaming, messaging and social media. It will help you to understand the importance of showing kindness and how to develop empathy online.

TOP TIPS FOR EVERYBODY

#WAKEUPWEDNESDAY

UNDERSTAND WHAT 'EMPATHY' IS

EMPATHY is the skill of recognising, understanding and caring about another person's feelings and taking action to help. This is trickier online because recognising and imagining how another person feels is hard when we are not with them face to face. When we try and understand how someone feels through words alone, it can lead to confusion or a misunderstanding.

FEEL, SEE AND UNDERSTAND

If we imagine ourselves in the situation of another person, we take another step down the path of empathy. It doesn't mean agreeing with the other person, but it means **UNDERSTANDING** how they feel. If you feel yourself becoming detached and uncaring perhaps develop a mental picture of them, so you can imagine them as real person and not just a bunch of words. If you know the person, consider a video chat or video call.

DEVELOP SELF EMPATHY

Although we tend to show the best of our lives through social media, the reality is we are not all perfect. Having **EMPATHY** for others means we need to also have self empathy. If we understand that we are not all perfect, including ourselves, we can find kindness.

OFFER HELP

According to Dr Dan Seigel, a clinical professor of psychiatry, being kind is really about respecting each other's vulnerability and wanting to help. So, when someone is sharing that they are struggling or finding life hard, offer help, even if the help is a **LISTENING** ear or saying, 'I can understand you would feel that way, I'm here for you'.

TRY TO ADD VALUE

Consider, before you comment on a post or image, how can I help this person to lower their sadness? How can I add something to **IMPROVE** their distress and happiness? Showing other people's pain as entertainment as a way to get noticed or more likes does not add value.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Think twice before you act. Consider, are you acting on anger, frustration or in a moment of judging a situation without knowing the **TRUTH**? Online, it is easy not to have all the facts and react to a situation which is being portrayed.

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF YOUR ~~WORDS~~ ACTIONS

Commenting online sometimes means that we don't actually 'see' the impact of our comments and words. This means it can be **EASIER** to detach from the consequences of our actions. Unkind comments do have consequences and can add to someone's distress and feeling about themselves.

DISASSOCIATE FROM PACK MENTALITY

Online, it is easy to get caught up with posting **NEGATIVE** comments because everyone else seems to be. Get comfortable with standing out, and not getting caught up posting negatively because everyone else is. Even if this means standing alone and reminding other people that their behaviour is unkind. Your courage could save a life.

#BEKIND

National Online Safety®

#WAKEUPWEDNESDAY

MEET OUR EXPERT

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department for Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.

For further info, check out these online resources too

https://www.themix.org.uk/

https://youngminds.org.uk/

https://www.mind.org.uk/

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