

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe



January 2024 | Secondary Edition

Building Healthy Relationships and Recognising Toxic Friendships

One of the essential aspects of growing up is forming relationships, whether romantic or platonic. Developing new relationships can teach us how to handle and understand emotions, increase communication skills, boost self-confidence, and create a sense of belonging. These relationships may have their highs and lows, and as a parent or caregiver, it's crucial to be observant and provide guidance and encouragement to your child.

Healthy relationships or friendships are built on mutual respect and support. These relationships are based on trust, and although they require effort, they should not be one-sided or leave one party feeling drained. A toxic relationship, on the other hand, often involves an uneven distribution of power, leading to a rollercoaster of emotions that swings between temporary highs and devastating lows for one of the parties involved. Unfortunately, this can have a significant impact on the mental well-being of the individual.

Spotting the signs of an unhealthy or toxic relationship

Observation is key when it comes to identifying potential red flags in your child's friendships. Keep an eye out for any warning signs, such as:

- a friend who tries to take control and boss your child around
- little effort is put into the friendship by the friend
- the friend can be unkind and overly critical
- the friend may be involved in a lot of drama.

Additionally, your child may:

- isolate themselves from other friends to spend time with this person
- worry about what the friend thinks of their decisions
- become involved in the friend's drama.

It is important to pay attention to how your child behaves in different situations and how their demeanour changes.

In this issue:

- Healthy relationships
- Online Grooming and Radicalisation
- App focus: BeReal

STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS IN YOUR CHILD

Whether or not you think your child has an unhealthy friendship, these strategies can help foster positive relationships. By providing them with the tools they need, your child can determine for themselves whether a relationship is beneficial or not.



GOOD ROLE MODELS

A great way to begin the dialogue is by speaking to your child about the qualities of a good friendship or relationship. To jumpstart this conversation, consider using examples from movies or TV shows that illustrate positive dynamics.

ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Avoid giving your opinion about your child's friendship right away as this may lead them to become defensive. Start by asking open-ended questions, for instance, "What do you think are the qualities of a good friend?"



EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION.

Encourage your child to communicate their feelings to their peers in a constructive manner. This can be as simple as providing them with the confidence to express their dislike towards something another child has said or done.



HELP THEM GET DISTANCE

Encourage them to spend time with individuals who have a positive influence on them. This will enable them to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships.



Relationships Healthy or Unhealthy?



"I feel like a different person when I'm around them"



"I can be myself, and they accept me for who I truly am"



"I sometimes feel judged and I am criticised for my own opinions"



"I have the freedom to voice my opinions even if they differ from my friends"

"I feel like I don't have control over who I am friends with"



"I feel free to choose who I want to spend time with"

"I give so much to the friendship but don't get much out of it"



"This is a two way relationship, give and take from both sides"

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

SPOTTING THE SIGNS ONLINE GROOMING

online

Change in behaviour

The young person now spends more time online than before, preferring to stay connected and engaged with their devices.

Being secretive

The young person becomes secretive about their online activities and no longer allows you to look at their devices.

New relationships

The young person has made new friends, some of whom might be older than them.

New ideas

The young person has a new curiosity for ideas and uses language you wouldn't expect them to know.

Withdrawn

The young person separates themselves from their usual friends, choosing to spend time online and with new friends

The Dangers of Online Grooming and Radicalisation
Online grooming, with the intention of radicalising children and young people, is more common than many people assume. Social media platforms have made it easier for children to access extremist material, which can be used to promote hateful views towards others. This can be especially dangerous as algorithms can suggest more and more similar content to young people who engage with this type of material. Even if you believe your child is not susceptible to online grooming, they may have 'friends' who are vulnerable. Children and young people may be unaware that they are being groomed as they believe they have made friends online rather than being recruited. Therefore, it is essential for parents and caregivers to understand the warning signs of online groomers.

How to Keep Your Child Safe Online

As a parent, the best way to protect your child online is through open communication. Discussing the dangers of online grooming and extremist content with your child is a good way to raise awareness. It is also crucial to emphasise that not everything they read online is true.

BeReal.

BeReal
Age restrictions: 13
years old

Introducing BeReal: The Authentic Photo-Sharing App

BeReal is a unique photo-sharing app that enables users to share one unfiltered photo daily, showcasing their current activity to their followers. Once a notification is sent, users have just two minutes to post their photo. Furthermore, the app captures both a selfie of the user and the view they are seeing by using both front and back cameras.

What Parents Should Know About BeReal:

- The more often someone uses the app, the more features they unlock, including the ability to post their BeReal on other social media sites, as well as seeing posts from unknown users.
- BeReal does not permit photo filtering, which distinguishes it from other apps that encourage flawless images. This can expose children to online bullying from their peers.
- Failing to post within the two-minute time limit can cause anxiety and stress for young users.