

HOW MIGHT YOUTUBE BE INFLUENCING YOUR CHILD?

Many of the worries that parents have regarding YouTube are not dissimilar from those they have towards other sites such as Facebook, Instagram and SnapChat. Content can often include strong language and problematic content. Young people who communicate with other users via the comment boxes can face abuse or even worse.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO THINK CRITICALLY WHEN WATCHING CLIPS...

Children may require guidance to evaluate the way in which information is presented online. Due to the crowded nature of the YouTube community, the popularity and reach of a video is dependent on the ability of the YouTuber's attempt to attract and retain viewers using a combination of skilful rhetoric and facts and anecdotes. Most important, of course, is the ability to entertain. Social commentators will, therefore, splice their commentary with music and other media which makes the content relatable but also often hyper-stimulating.

More often than not, however, the vlogger is expressing an opinion, rather than exploring issues from an expert standpoint.

FINDING AN ONLINE IDENTITY AND MENTAL HEALTH



Being part of the online community gives young people the ability to watch and talk with others who share their concerns or life-experiences. Popular YouTubers who talk about sensitive issues include Mike Fox and Zoella who discuss, amongst other topics, anxiety and depression.

The ability to hear others talk openly on such topics can be extremely empowering for children who may have previously experienced rejection or isolation. However, such messages can also be very confusing for some vulnerable viewers who may imitate behaviours or take on ideas that are not actually true or helpful for them on an individual level. This can make it complicated for expert adults to get to the source of a young person's issues and guide them to appropriate help.

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ONLINE CRUELTY AND PRANKING VIDEOS

Amongst the usually silly content of compilation videos such as “Try Not to Laugh,” there will usually be a video of someone pranking a friend or stranger.

Some YouTubers such as Ben Phillips have developed their YouTube persona around uploading videos of this nature. Aside from the risk of children getting hurt or into trouble by copying behaviours that they see enacted online, children can be confused as to the extent that the participants of the prank have consented to participate.

As children feel under pressure to produce a high-volume of video content for YouTube and Snap Chat, the phenomenon of the YouTube prankster has normalised the filming of others without permission. Young people deserve to have a conversation with a parent/carer regarding the rights of others.

PSEUDO-EXPERTS AND FAKE FACTS



Just as fake facts are a real threat to the ability of adults to relate to others and make choices about the decisions that affect them, younger users of YouTube may lack the skills needed to assess the reliability of online sources and resources. YouTube provides a forum for a whole range of perspectives from product testing to thoughts related to social justice.

In the case of the former, a number of successful vloggers are approached by commercial brands to promote brands during ‘advertorial vlogs’, a practice that is regulated by the Advertising Standards Agency. As the video usually reflects the familiar vlogging style of the YouTuber, younger viewers will need it explained to them that the endorsement of the product or brand at the focus of the discussion or activity is for financial gain.