



parenting for Wellness

Toolbox for Parents

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SINGAPORE



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DEVELOPMENT

Preface

We are excited that you are taking this step to learn and grow with your child! Parenting is not about perfection, but a journey of growth. As parents, you play a significant role in helping your child navigate the challenges of growing up. *Parenting for Wellness* is an initiative that aims to empower and equip you with the knowledge and skills to:

- build strong parent-child relationships;
- strengthen your child's mental well-being and emotional resilience; and
- parent effectively in the digital age.

This *Toolbox for Parents* contains:

- bite-sized content on key parenting domains;
- quick tips and practical strategies that you can use as you encounter different scenarios that arise as your child develops between 7 and 19 years old;
- conversation starters to facilitate meaningful conversations between you and your child; and
- QR codes at the top right-hand corner that will bring you to the full suite of parenting content on the *Parenting for Wellness* website.

Some of the strategies are intended for younger children (e.g. Supporting Your Child in Performing Age-Appropriate Tasks) while others are designed with older children in mind (e.g. Helping Your Child Thrive in the Online Space). We encourage you to adapt the strategies based on your family context and your child's needs.

We hope these *Parenting for Wellness* resources support you in raising happy, confident and kind children.

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For the full suite of *Parenting for Wellness* content, click [here](#) to access the *Parenting for Wellness* website or scan the QR code below.



<https://go.gov.sg/pfw-landing-page>

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Part of these resources were adapted from the Parenting Strategies Program (<https://www.parentingstrategies.net>) and the Partners in Parenting (PiP) Program in Australia, in consultation with the Program Lead, Professor Marie Yap from Monash University. Use of the materials from the PiP Program is governed by the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>. Your attention is drawn to Section 5 of the terms of the said license.



Building Relationships



How You Parent vs. How You Were Parented



Understanding Yourself as a Parent

As you embark on your journey to understand your parenting approach and learn ways to better support your child, one of your first steps is to reflect on the values and beliefs that you were raised with and hold dearly to. These values guide your parenting decisions and directly impact your relationship with your child.

Take some time to reflect on the following:



- What were your parents' values when they were raising you?
- What values are important to you as a parent, and why do they matter?
- What are your spouse's values, and how are they similar to or different from yours?
- What did the significant adults in your life do or say to make you feel important, loved and cared for? What do you plan to do so that your child can feel the same way?



Your Relationship with Your Child

As a parent, your values in parenting can affect the way you communicate and interact with your child. This contributes to how they see the world and form their own values.

It is also important to understand how you are feeling and how to manage your emotions. Reacting to a situation emotionally can confuse your child as what you say or do may not accurately reflect your true intentions in the moment.

Take some time to reflect on the following:



- What are your biggest hopes or dreams, and worries for your child?
- How are your interactions with your child? How would you like your interactions to be?
- Which topics typically lead to more heated or tense discussions with your child? How can you approach these topics more sensitively?

Tips

- 1 Share the values that matter to you.
- 2 Ask your child what they value and discuss how those values can guide family interactions.
- 3 Draw links between the behaviour you are hoping to teach and the values behind them that are important to you and your family.

Sample Conversations



I know when we talk about your studies, we often end up arguing. ① No matter what we are discussing, I hope we can have respectful conversations. ② How do you think we can improve our communication?

You always call me 'lazy' when we talk about my studies. I don't like it because I've actually been working very hard.



② Thank you for sharing with me. It's important to me that you feel safe to share your honest feelings and thoughts. ③ As long as you try your best at your studies and don't give up easily when you can't resolve the problem, I'm proud of you.



Expressing Your Love and Acceptance



You play an important role in helping your child feel accepted and valued. You can do this by showing appreciation and admiration for their unique traits. That said, showing love and acceptance to your child does not mean accepting all of their behaviours. When your child misbehaves, focus on addressing their behaviour without putting them down. You can still show love and acceptance by validating their feelings. This lets them know that you understand how they feel and why they behaved the way they did.

There's no one right way to show affection to your child, as long as they feel loved and cared for. Adjust how you show affection as they grow, and as their preferences change.



Tips

- 1 If you and your child are in a disagreement or if you have to discipline your child, let them know that you still love and accept them for who they are.
- 2 Help them understand that it is okay to make mistakes.
- 3 Offer words of encouragement at every opportunity, even if either you or your child is having a hard time.
- 4 Show affection in a variety of ways, such as smiles, high-fives, acts of service or spending quality time together.
- 5 Celebrate and affirm your child's efforts in overcoming difficulties.

Sample Conversations



1 I understand that you are angry, but we don't slam doors in this house. If you're angry and need space to calm down, let me know so we can find another time to talk about it. You know that I love you no matter what.



I should have done better in this exam! I am so stupid!



2 I understand that you are frustrated. Mistakes are part of life and do not reflect who you are as a person. They are opportunities for us to learn and grow. The next time you make a mistake, try asking "What can I learn from this?"

I just don't think I can do well in this subject.



3 It's natural to feel that way. 5 I am still very proud of you. You have put so much effort in preparing for this exam, even when it was difficult. 3 Even if the results are not what you expected, we can think about what you have learnt from this experience and plan how you can improve in the future. 4 I am here for you and want to help you through this. Would you prefer if I help you with your revision or if we go for a short break together?



Being Present and Showing Positive Attention

Your presence is the greatest present to your child. When you show your child that you take interest in their life and are there for them, they are more likely to share any issues or challenges they may be facing. The key purpose of providing positive attention is to show that you care, and not to monitor them.



✓ Things You Can Do

- 1 You may be busy when your child wants to talk to you. If possible, pause what you are doing, even briefly, to listen to them.
 - Let them know that you appreciate them opening up to you, and agree on a better time for both of you to have a conversation.
- 2 Regularly set aside time to talk to your child. Give them your undivided attention during this time.
 - The best conversations can happen naturally any time during the day (e.g. during mealtimes, while travelling somewhere or while playing games together).

🕒 Tips

For younger children

- 1 Ask about topics like school events, their favourite movies or subjects.
- 2 Use follow-up questions or statements to find out more.

For older children

- 1 Ask about topics like their social interactions.
- 2 Pace conversations based on their receptiveness and responses. Avoid pressuring them to respond.
- 3 Let them know that you are asking because you love them and are curious about their interests.
- 4 Let them know you will listen whenever they are ready to share.

🗣️ Sample Conversations



- 1 You went on a learning journey to the zoo with your classmates, right? What did you see there?

We saw so many animals, like monkeys, giraffes and sloths!



- 2 Oh, nice! What interesting facts did you learn?



- 1 How was school today? You had a CCA leadership meeting, right?

It was okay...



- 2 What were some interesting things that happened?

...nothing much. I don't really want to talk about it.



- 2 It seems like you've had a long day. 3 I know your CCA is important to you, and I want to support you. 4 Let me know when you want to talk about it later.



Setting Goals with Your Child



As you communicate with your child, they are likely to share their hopes for what they want to achieve, as well as their challenges and worries. Setting goals together using the **S.M.A.R.T.** framework can guide them towards their goals, while strengthening your parent-child relationship.

S.M.A.R.T.

Tips

- 1 Ask what they hope to achieve before offering suggestions.
- 2 Guide your child to set **Specific** goals.
- 3 Make sure progress towards the goal is **Measurable**.
- 4 Guide your child using specific steps to set **Achievable** goals.
- 5 If your child is imposing high expectations on themselves, guide them to set **Realistic** goals.
- 6 Make sure the goals are **Time-bound**.

Sample Conversations



1 You've been on the track and field team for a while. How are you feeling about the upcoming year?

It would be nice if I could win a medal at the National School Games.



2 That's an amazing goal! What's a good timing to get a medal for the 1.6 km run event?

Maybe under...8 minutes?



3 Currently, your timing is around 8 minutes 30 seconds. What do you need to do to be on track towards reaching your goal?

I think that I need to cut my timing down by 5 seconds every two weeks.



4 So, you will be training every week then?

Hmm...I will probably do interval trainings twice a week at my target speed, and maybe endurance and strength training once a week.



Wow! 3 days of training sounds intense. 5 Maybe you should discuss this with your team coach to see if she thinks this plan is feasible? 6 You have half a year until the competition. Let's make sure you have a good plan that can help you meet your goal.



Being Aware of Your Own and Your Child's Feelings

We experience a range of feelings on a daily basis. In high-tension situations, your feelings may lead you to do or say something that you do not mean (e.g. shouting, saying unkind words). Recognise and understand your own feelings, so that you can better manage your reactions and avoid responding to your child in a way that can be hurtful.



✓ Things You Can Do

- ① **Take a moment to notice signs that tell you what you are feeling (e.g. sensations in your body).**
 - Ask yourself why you might be feeling this way.
- ② **Guide your child to use this method to recognise and understand their own feelings.**
 - This is an important first step to help your child express and manage their feelings in appropriate and healthy ways.

Here are some ways to be more aware of your own and your child's feelings:

🕒 Tips

- ① Look out for signs that you or your child may be feeling down, anxious or frustrated.
- ② Help younger children understand their feelings better by teaching ways to identify and name their feelings.
- ③ Older children go through many changes in a short period of time. They may need space to reflect on their feelings and experiences.
- ④ Let them know that you will be there for them if they want to talk.

🗣️ Sample Conversations



- ① I notice you've recently been quieter than usual. Please share with me what's going on.

Sarah and I are not friends anymore. Stop asking me! I don't want to talk about it!



- ② Oh no, I'm sorry to hear that. How do you feel about it?

I don't know.



- ② How does it feel like in your body?

I feel like I'm about to explode. I just feel like crying.



- ② I can see that you're very upset with this friendship problem with Sarah, perhaps even angry as well. It's natural to experience such mixed feelings because you care about the friendship and ③ you'll probably need some time to think through this. ④ I'll wait for you to be ready to talk about it.



Providing a Safe Space for Conversations

It can be challenging to grapple with uncomfortable feelings and negative thoughts. Children may hesitate to share their true thoughts and feelings with their parents, as they may fear being judged or misunderstood.

You can let your child know that it is normal to feel or think the way they do, and that they can feel safe expressing themselves with you.



✓ Things You Can Do



Listen attentively. Maintain eye contact and put away your devices to show that you are paying attention.



Ensure that the environment is conducive and comfortable for your child. E.g. recreate an environment where your child had previously opened up to you, and have the conversation in a place where your child feels they have privacy.



Listen to understand, instead of listening in order to give advice and offer solutions.



Take a step back to calm down if things get heated, and return to the conversation after calming down.



Check that your child is comfortable with you sharing what they have told you with other people. If you have to do so out of concern for their safety, explain to your child why it is necessary.

○ Things You Can Say

- Use open ended questions to find out more about your child's perspectives and feelings.

How did that make you feel?

- Acknowledge that your child's opinions and feelings are valid, even if you disagree with them or do not fully understand them.

I hear that you are feeling frustrated.

- Let your child know that it is natural to experience these feelings, and that you experience them too.

I can see why you are upset.
I would be too.

- If you are not sure what else to do, you can let your child know you are concerned for them, and offer support or a listening ear.

How can I help? What support do you need from me?

! Avoid responding negatively to your child, such as with criticism (e.g. "That was stupid."), minimising their feelings (e.g. "Get over it.") or shaming them (e.g. "You're so useless.").



Helping Your Child Manage Their Thoughts



Your thoughts influence your feelings, which in turn, affect your behaviours.

When faced with challenging situations, you may find yourself having *Automatic Negative Thoughts* (ANTs) that negatively affect how you feel about yourself, others and the situation.

These ANTs (e.g. "I am not good enough," "I am going to do badly today." etc.) may appear in your mind instantaneously, sometimes without you being aware of how they came about.



✓ Things You Can Do

If your child has ANTs, guide them to reframe their mindset and develop healthy thinking habits by using the **Recall-Rationalise-Replace** strategy.



1 Recall

Help your child identify which ANTs triggered uncomfortable or difficult feelings.



2 Rationalise

Help your child challenge the ANTs to break their influence on your child's feelings.



3 Replace

Guide your child to replace ANTs with helpful, constructive thoughts.

○ Things You Can Say



1 What were you thinking about when you started feeling anxious?



2 What makes you think this way? What would you say to a friend if they said the same thing to you?



3 Let's think about this in a more helpful way. Perhaps you can think: "I feel disappointed that I didn't do as well as I hoped, but I learnt that I need to work on my public speaking skills."



Read the article "Are these ANTs bugging you?" published by the Ministry of Education to find out more about ANTs.





Helping Your Child Manage Their Feelings

Your child is learning how to manage their strong feelings in healthy ways, and sometimes they may not express these feelings appropriately (e.g. slamming of doors when they are angry). Consider these ways to guide them to better manage their feelings.



✓ Things You Can Do

- 1 Show concern for how they are feeling.
- 2 Try to separate your reaction to your child's feelings from your reaction to their behaviours. Let them know that while you recognise that it is normal to experience intense feelings, not all behaviours (ways of expressing feelings) are acceptable.
- 3 Share how to manage negative feelings by using the **Stop-Think-Do** strategy.

○ Things You Can Say

- 1 I know that you are feeling upset. It's okay to feel that way.
- 2 The feeling must have been really intense, to have caused you to shout at and hit your brother. But we can't hurt others, even when we feel really angry.



Stop

Pause before reacting, and do something that will help them to calm down.

I can see that you are feeling upset. Let's take a few deep breaths together.



Think

When your child is calmer, guide them to use the **Recall-Rationalise-Replace** strategy to identify and challenge the thoughts that triggered their uncomfortable feelings.

What made you feel that way? What were you thinking of before you started feeling upset?



Do

Explore constructive ways to respond to the situation.

What is a more useful way of responding to this situation?

Role model for your child the STOP-THINK-DO strategy as you are the best teacher for your child.

✓ Things You Can Do (for yourself):

- 1 **Stop:** Take some time to calm down before reacting to your child. Utilise your preferred coping strategies, such as taking deep breaths.
- 2 **Think:** When you feel calmer, think about your child's specific behaviour(s) that triggered those feelings in you.
- 3 **Do:** Try to understand what made your child act in the way that they did, and explore how you and your child could react more constructively to a similar situation in the future.



Establishing Family Rules and Decisions Together



To grow up well, your child needs clear boundaries and expectations for their behaviours. You play a big role in setting these boundaries and expectations for your child.

Family rules reflect the expectations within a family for how each family member should behave, look after one another and treat each other. **Creating family rules is a two-way discussion between you and your child.**

✓ Things You Can Do

- ① Set rules for younger children, but give older children more flexibility and autonomy.
- ② Review and adjust these rules as your child matures and is able to take on more responsibilities.

🕒 Tips

- ① Keep family rules to a minimum, and only when necessary.
- ② Help your child understand the rationale behind these rules.
- ③ Involve all family members, including your child, when setting family rules. If they contribute to the rules, they are more likely to accept it.
- ④ Keep the rules simple by setting clear expectations and consequences. Rules should tell family members what to do, rather than what not to do.
- ⑤ Be fair and consistent when upholding family rules.

🗣️ Sample Conversations



① I would like to set some family rules about using our devices while at home. ② I feel this is important to help us spend more quality time with each other. ③ Any ideas for how we can achieve this?

Maybe we can set aside some time when none of us can use phones?



④ That sounds like a good idea. How about we do that during mealtimes? We will give our full attention when we talk to each other. ⑤ Your mother and I will follow this rule as well. ③ If anyone breaks this rule, what do you think the consequence should be?





Letting Your Child Experience Natural & Logical Consequences



It is natural to want to shield your child from negative consequences, but these can also be valuable learning experiences. Enforcing consistent and appropriate consequences for breaking rules is crucial for your child's development. The consequences should be adjusted according to their age and maturity.



Did You Know?

Natural consequences are outcomes of actions that happen naturally, and were not carried out by you.

E.g. When your child's grades are affected because of a lack of revision.

Logical consequences are outcomes of actions that are consistently carried out by you or other adults, and are related to the behaviour that you are trying to discourage.

E.g. Loss of privileges (e.g. reduced gaming or device use), time-out periods for reflection.

✓ Things You Can Do

- 1 Allow your child to face natural consequences, even if they are unpleasant.
- 2 Help your child understand why their behaviour was wrong without using insults like "lazy", "stupid" or "naughty".

🗨 Things You Can Say

- 1 What was going through your mind when you received your results?
- 2 What led to this outcome? What would you do differently in future?

What do you think we can do to make up for your mistake?

In general, logical consequences should be unpleasant enough that they discourage misbehaviour, but it should not be humiliating or embarrassing.

For younger children,

- 1 When both of you are calm, explain to your child what they can expect from the consequences.
- 2 Explain the reason for these consequences.

For younger children,

- 1 Based on our previous agreement, snatching toys will get you a time-out
- 2 because it is rude, and you might hurt yourself and others when you snatch toys.
- 1 This 5-minute time-out is for you to sit quietly in the room to calm yourself down, think about what you did, and how you can make things better.

For older children:

- 3 Involve them in deciding the consequences of their misbehaviour.

For older children,

- 3 You promised to do the mopping last week, and we agreed that the consequence for not completing your chores would be that you cannot go out with your friends. Please complete your chores before I can allow you to go out.

1 hour only!

You forgot to do your homework!





Celebrating Your Child's Efforts and Successes



Celebrating your child's efforts and successes helps to reinforce good behaviours. **In fact, celebrating and praising efforts are generally more effective ways to encourage lasting behavioural changes, compared to punishment.**

✓ Things You Can Do



Celebrate your child's efforts, successes and the experiences gained along the way regardless of the final outcomes.

For younger children:

- 1 Ask your child to write down positive things that they have done or achieved (e.g. being chosen to be a group leader, doing housework, helping a friend out) on a board at home to recognise achievements. Ask them to update the board regularly.



For older children:

- 1 Make a conscious effort to celebrate their milestones and achievements (e.g. graduating from secondary school, finding a part time job).
- 2 Ask how they would like to celebrate and involve them in planning the celebration.
- 3 Discuss with your child and agree on extrinsic rewards.
 - Examples of extrinsic rewards include: more independence (e.g. later curfew), gifts, engaging in meaningful activities (e.g. classes that they are interested in).
- 4 Remember to focus on intrinsic rewards as well by asking them to share their sense of meaning or accomplishment.

○ Things You Can Say

- 1 Be specific in praising your child's efforts whenever they do something good.

You were angry just now, but you managed to calm yourself down. That was very mature of you.

- 2 Tell your child that you are proud of them, e.g. how they had tried their best in overcoming an obstacle.

I can see how hard you had tried and I'm really proud of you!



- Avoid comparing your child with other children as that may lower your child's morale and make them less eager to give their best effort.
- Avoid overpraising them or overpromising rewards, to prevent excessive reliance on extrinsic rewards which may not build your child's motivation for doing well.
- Avoid taking away rewards that your child has already earned.



Helping Your Child Develop Good Daily Habits

Developing good daily habits and coping skills can help your child lead a healthy, balanced lifestyle and manage their feelings. This can help them buffer the negative effects of distress.

✓ Things You Can Do



1 Affirm your child when they engage in good daily habits. Role model these habits yourself too.



2 Use a planner to keep track of daily activities.



3 Even during hectic periods, encourage your child to set aside time for rest and exercise.

4 important areas in our lives in which to build healthy daily habits:

① Nutrition



Have a balanced diet of nutritious food.

- Involving your child in preparing nutritious meals can make them more willing to eat healthily.
- Limit the number of snacks available at home. Opt for water as a default beverage or choose beverages that are lower in sugar.

💬 "What do you think about setting a rule for how often we should eat fast food?"

② Exercise



Have an average of 1 hour of physical activity per day across a week, at moderate or vigorous intensity.

- This can be as simple as walking home instead of taking the bus.

💬 "What kind of exercise do you enjoy? How can we make this a habit?"

③ Sleep



Have a regular sleep routine and healthy pre-sleep rituals.

- Avoid screen use at least 1 hour before bedtime.
- If your child has difficulty falling asleep due to overstimulation, they can try a non-stimulating activity like listening to soothing music.

💬 "What should we do or not do before bedtime?"

④ Digital



Have a healthy balance of age-appropriate screen use and offline activities that are important for your child's development.

When deciding how much screen use is appropriate for your child, consider your child's age and needs to strike a healthy balance. Children aged 7-12 should have consistent screen time limits.

- Have regular conversations with your child to better understand what they do online. Is it school work or are they engaging in recreational activities?
- Discuss and develop a timetable with your child to moderate the time spent on recreational screen use. Parental control settings can be used to monitor and limit screen use as agreed with your child.

💬 "What do you think is a reasonable amount of time to spend on your phone for leisure?"



Read the Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines published by Sport Singapore and Health Promotion Board (HPB) for preschoolers, school children, and youths (pages 17-20).



For more tips on sleeping well, visit HealthHub's MindSG.





Supporting Your Child in Performing Age-Appropriate Tasks



Life experiences can equip your child with the skills, mindset, independence and confidence needed to thrive on their own.

You can intentionally create a nurturing and empowering environment that is safe and conducive for your child to try new things and learn from setbacks.

✓ Things You Can Do



1 Involve your child in selecting and scheduling activities for the family (e.g. planning meals or doing grocery shopping). When your child is ready, encourage them to plan these activities independently.



2 Give your child opportunities to make age-appropriate decisions.

- For younger children, this could be found in day-to-day matters like what to eat or what co-curricular activity to join.
- For older children, this could involve more important decisions in areas such as careers or relationships.



3 Involve your child in household chores.

- Show your child how to do the chores properly, then do it together with them. Finally, encourage your child to try doing it on their own.
- Allow your child to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Affirm your child's progress while they are doing the chores, instead of only after they have completed them.

○ Things You Can Say

1 Affirm your child's efforts and encourage them to try again if they fail.

It was nice of you to help me cook. I know the chicken was a little charred, but it's okay. Let's try again next week. What changes shall we make to the cooking process?

2 Express concerns in an open and respectful way. Let your child know that you trust their judgement.

While I don't think that you should leave your pieces of homework till the last week of the holidays, I trust that you have planned enough time to complete them.



Role Modelling Respectful Conversations and Relationships



When your child learns to engage in respectful conversations, they become a better communicator, friend and source of support to others.

As parents, you are in the best position to role model these skills through daily interactions with your child.

Tips

- 1 If you lose your temper with your child, acknowledge it and apologise to them. This models taking responsibility for one's behaviour, which will earn your child's respect.
- 2 Use I-Messages to help your child consider things from another perspective.
- 3 Give your child some time to process their thoughts and feelings before sharing them with you.
- 4 Affirm your child when they show respect while communicating.
- 5 Show your child how to negotiate and come to a compromise.

Sample Conversations



- 1 I'm sorry I raised my voice at you earlier. I've calmed down and
- 3 would like to continue our conversation if you are ready.

Mum, I just don't understand why you have a problem with me having dinner with my CCA friends. I'm already 13 years old and all my friends are doing it.



- 2 I know that you are upset by this, and that we don't agree. But let me share my views. I feel uncomfortable that you're staying out late with your new friends, because I don't know who they are. That makes me worry for your safety.
- 3 Could you consider that for a moment?

I understand why that makes you uncomfortable, but my new friends are nice people. We are just having dinner.



- 4 Thank you for trying to see where I'm coming from.
- 5 How about introducing me to your new friends? That way, I can feel more assured that you are safe when you spend time with them.

Tip: Text messages cannot accurately convey tone, emotions and body language, and can be easily misinterpreted by the recipient. When sending text messages to your child, you should be mindful of how they may perceive your message. Also, avoid sending messages in all capital letters or bold font, even when you are upset with your child's behaviour.



Helping Your Child Build Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships and supportive networks contribute to your child's overall well-being, and allow them to experience a sense of community and belonging.



✓ Things You Can Do



1 Expose your child to a range of social situations.

- For younger children, create opportunities for them to interact with other children of similar ages (e.g. attend school camps).
- For older children, encourage them to make friends with peers who have similar interests.



2 Encourage your child to strengthen existing relationships.

- Foster healthy relationships with supportive extended family members.
- Encourage your child to stay in touch with their friends and trusted adults (e.g. meet up with former classmates, visit former teachers on Teachers' Day).

○ Things You Can Say

1 Talk to your child about the qualities that make a good friend (e.g. empathy, being respectful), and how to exhibit these qualities.

When you see your friend struggling, put yourself in their shoes. How would you want a friend to support you?

2 Older children are often figuring out the balance between being themselves and fitting in with others. Stay connected with your child and let them know that they can talk to you if they feel pressured to act in ways that they are uncomfortable with.

If you ever feel pressured to do something or be someone you are not in order to fit in, please know that you can come to me to share your thoughts and struggles. We will work through that together.

3 Listen to your child's problems and ask probing questions to help them find ways to resolve their friendship issues.

How has this affected you or your friend?

What are your expectations of a good friend?

How can you make things better?



Giving Your Child S.P.A.C.E. to Build Resilience



Resilience is not something that you are either born with or not. It is something that everyone can develop and grow. Give your child space to find ways to solve their problems, while remaining available to provide help if and when they reach out. This will help your child see their family as a safe and reliable source of support.

Give your child **S.P.A.C.E.** by trying the following tips:

Tips

1 Support

- Let your child know that you are there for them
- Be willing to listen to your child

2 Problem-solve

- Guide your child in solving problems together

3 Affirm

- Affirm your child's strengths and effort
- Provide your child with words of encouragement

4 Cheer

- Cheer your child on for the effort that they make
- Share inspirational stories of how you or others had overcome challenges

5 Empower

- Let your child make decisions
- Encourage your child to voice their ideas, and to carry out plans that they have made

Sample Conversations



3 It's normal to feel nervous when you have to speak in front of so many people. I'm proud of you for trying your best. If this is making you feel down, you can always share that with me. I'll always be here for you. 2 Instead of worrying about what has already happened, let's think of how you can better prepare for future presentations! 1 Is there anything that I can do to help?

1 Can I practise for my next presentation with you as my audience?



Yes, you can! 4 Let's take baby steps towards your goal and learn along the way.

I think I might also want to try preparing a speech, and timing myself to ensure that I keep to the time limit.



5 They both sound like good ideas. Trying different methods is a good way to see what works best for you.



Supporting Your Child in Overcoming Challenges



While facing setbacks can be difficult, remind your child that experiencing difficulties and challenges are opportunities for them to learn and grow.



Tips

- 1 Provide your child with opportunities to make decisions, solve problems, discover their strengths and build self-confidence.
- 2 Guide your child to break challenges into smaller chunks, and come up with steps they can take to address these challenges.
- 3 When discussing the challenges that your child is facing in their lives, build their resilience by:
 - Acknowledging what they are feeling about their challenges;
 - Guiding them to think about ways to use their strengths to overcome challenges;
 - Encouraging them to reflect on their current strengths and uncover new ones.
- 4 Share stories where you or others overcame and grew from past challenges.

Sample Conversations



1 I heard that the kids' gym has a new obstacle course. Shall we go there this Saturday?

I don't know. I'm scared that I will fall like I did at the playground today.



I know it can be scary to try something new, but I will be with you the whole time. 2 Do you remember what Coach Jenny taught you about stopping yourself from falling when you first started gymnastics?

She said I should hold onto the hand rails and look straight ahead.



2 Try that. 3 What else do you think will help?

Actually, I've been practising my balance during gymnastics, so I just have to stay calm and focused.



4 That sounds like a good plan. You know, I get scared when I try new things too. There was once I tried a rope obstacle course and I fell. It was painful, but I kept trying and I eventually mastered it.



Supporting Your Child in Overcoming Challenges

Guide your child to apply the “**I Am, I Can, I Have**” framework to overcome their challenges. “I Am” and “I Can” refer to their internal strengths. “I Have” refers to their external strengths.

By using the conversation starters below, you can help your child develop their resilience.



Descriptor

Resilience-Building Conversations

Possible Resilience-Building Responses

Internal Strengths

I Am

The beliefs about myself and how I perceive the situation that I am in

What beliefs had helped you overcome past challenges?

What did you tell yourself while you were overcoming past struggles?

- **Hope/Positive outlook:** I am hopeful for the future.
- **Growth mindset:** I am learning from my mistakes.
- **Self-esteem:** I am someone of worth, that people like and love.

I Can

The skills and strategies I can use to work through the situation that I am in

What strategies or skills did you use to resolve past problems?

What did you do to overcome past struggles?

- **Problem-solving:** I can find ways to solve problems that I face.
- **Help-seeking:** I can find someone to talk to about things that frighten or bother me, or that I cannot solve on my own.
- **Emotional regulation/coping:** I can find healthy ways to manage or cope with what I am feeling.

External Strengths

I Have

The trusted adults and peers around me who can help me overcome the situation that I am in

Who did you turn to for help when you were struggling?

How did you tap into your resources (e.g. teachers, school counsellors and friends) for help, support and encouragement?

- **Support:** I have people who encourage me when I am going through a tough time.
- **Belonging:** I have a group of friends that I can trust.
- **Role modelling:** I have people who show me examples of how to do the right things.



Solving Problems Using S.O.D.A.S.



The ups and downs of life are opportunities for you to role model ways to deal with difficulties and challenges. Children observe those around them and learn from the people whom they look up to.

Share with your child the benefits of learning from past mistakes and encourage them to take initiative to solve the problems they face. Being able to work through and solve their own problems builds confidence to deal with future problems.



Use the **S.O.D.A.S.** problem-solving approach to break down problems with your child:

Tips

1 Guide your child to identify the **Situation**.

2 Think about the **Options** they have or can take.

3 Weigh the **Disadvantages** of each option.

4 Weigh the **Advantages** of each option.

5 Decide on a **Solution**.

Sample Conversations



1 You seem stressed these days. What's on your mind?

My exams are around the corner. I'm feeling stressed from the constant revising of my notes.



2 Have you taken a break at all? What are some ways you can manage your stress?

2 I can play computer games or go for a run to destress.



3 What are some possible negative consequences of the options that you shared?

3 Running will take longer because I'll need to wash up after that. And I might not be able to stop gaming, or be distracted even after I'm done.



4 What are some possible positive outcomes about the options that you shared?

4 Both will help me feel better, but running is healthier.



5 Which do you think is the better solution?

5 I think I'll go for a run. Would you like to join me?



5 Sure!



Managing Conflict at Home



Conflicts are a part of life. However, being exposed to frequent or unresolved conflicts at home can increase your child's risk of developing mental health concerns.



Creating a safe and supportive family environment is not about avoiding all conflicts, but learning how to manage conflicts well.

- After everyone has calmed down from a family conflict, let your child know that it is okay for family members to disagree with each other or to make mistakes.
- Establish ground rules to help your child manage conflict well. Useful rules include avoiding personal attacks and hurtful statements, agreeing on a time-out to calm down when tensions are high and taking responsibility for your own mistakes.
- Have the courage to apologise and work towards a resolution if the conflict was caused by you. It does not show weakness as a parent. Instead, you will be role modelling the behaviour you wish to see in your child.

Tips

Managing Conflict with Your Spouse

- 1 Focus on actions and behaviours (e.g. "I feel angry when you do/say..."), rather than making comments about your spouse as a person (e.g. "You always make me angry").
- 2 Work out differences between you and your spouse in private. Avoid making your child take sides or play the role of a messenger for either parent.
- 3 Discuss expectations for your child with your spouse and agree on your parenting approach.

Sample Conversations



1 I did not like how you bought Darren the toy car after I already told him no.

He kept asking me and he has been having such a hard time in school.



He needs to learn that he won't get his way all the time.

2 I agree. But does that mean we can't let him have what he wants once in a while?



3 He can have things he asks for once in a while, but we should agree on buying it for him first. We both agree that Darren needs to learn that he won't always get what he wants. How do you think we can help him learn that?



If a family member is violent towards other family members, seek immediate professional help. Call the **National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline (NAVH) at 1800-777-0000**,

or visit a nearby **Family Service Centre (FSC)** to speak to a family counsellor or social worker. Scan the following QR code to find the nearest FSC.





Managing Conflict at Home



Tips

Managing Sibling Conflict

- 1 Before conflicts occur, set family rules on how conflicts should be managed (e.g. going to another room to calm down when you feel angry).
- 2 Affirm your children when you notice them getting along with or helping each another.
- 3 When your children have calmed down, discuss the incident with them, including what they have learnt and how they can deal with conflict in future.
- 4 Encourage your children to spend quality time together (e.g. playing games, exercising together).



Sample Conversations



Beth is being stupid again.
She keeps blocking the TV.

Ayden, YOU are stupid!
<runs towards Ayden>



- 1 Ayden, Beth, we agreed that in the family, we would not call each other names. You both need a time-out to calm down and reflect on how you behaved towards each other. Once you have both calmed down, we will talk about how we could have dealt with the situation differently.

<After Ayden and Beth have calmed down.>



You both did something wrong to each other. Beth, it was not right for you to block your brother from watching TV. Ayden, it was also not right for you to call your sister stupid. Let's apologise for the behaviour that has upset each other.

Ayden, I'm sorry for blocking the TV.



Beth, I'm sorry for calling you stupid. It was hurtful and I shouldn't have said that.



- 2 Thank you for apologising to each other.
- 3 It's important that we get along well and be kind to each other in our family.
- 4 Let's spend some quality time together.
How about going to the park to cycle together?



Encouraging Your Child to Seek Help



It is important to remind ourselves that **help-seeking is not a sign of weakness**, but a **sign of resilience and courage**.

You can encourage your child to seek help by reminding them to stay calm, reassuring them of your support and being patient with them.

Tips

1 Let your child know to seek help when their stress becomes distress, and when they feel overwhelmed by their feelings or thoughts.

2 Help your child learn how to seek help from a trusted adult and/or peer. Encourage your child to describe the situation and their thoughts and feelings about it.

3 Show your child where they can seek help from. These could be:

- Websites or helplines;
- Support networks (e.g. trusted adults, parents, counsellors, friends).

Sample Conversations



Hey, you seem down lately. What's going on? I'm here to listen.



Things have been weird. Dinesh stopped talking to me and I don't know why.



Oh no. Do you want to tell me more about it?



No... I don't know what happened. I don't want to make things worse.



1 It sounds like you're going through a stressful time. If the stress feels too overwhelming, 3 you can always talk to me about it. I'm here for you. Is there anyone who can help you find out why Dinesh isn't talking to you?



Maybe Jia Jun. Jia Jun is close to Dinesh too.



3 Jia Jun has been your close friend since primary school. 2 What will you say to Jia Jun?



2 I know talking to Jia Jun about my problems will help me feel better. Maybe I'll also ask Jia Jun if he knows whether Dinesh is angry with me.



Supporting Your Child's Mental Health



Understanding Mental Health and Well-Being

According to the Singapore Youth Epidemiology and Resilience (YEAR) Study (2023) conducted by the National University of Singapore,

1 in 3 youths (aged 10 to 18) in Singapore experienced symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, and loneliness.



Common mental health conditions experienced by children and youth include:



Generalised Anxiety Disorder



Major Depressive Disorder

Here are some common myths and misconceptions about mental health:



Myth/ Misconception

Having good mental health means not having any mental health conditions.



Mental health conditions are caused by a lack of self-discipline and willpower.



My child will not have a good future if they have poor mental health or are diagnosed with a mental health condition.



Reality

Good mental health is more than not having a mental health condition. It refers to a state of well-being where we realise our potential and can cope with the varying emotions and normal stresses that we all experience in our daily lives.¹

Mental health conditions usually result from the **interaction of biological** (e.g. genetics) and **environmental factors** (e.g. stress) **over time**.

With the right treatment and support, people with mental health conditions **can lead meaningful and fulfilling lives**, especially if they seek help early and have supportive family and friends.

¹ Adapted from World Health Organisation (WHO)'s definition.



Understanding Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health conditions are not caused by a lack of discipline or willpower. It is usually a combination of risk factors and stressful life events, as well as a lack of protective factors, that contribute to the development of a mental health condition. A single factor cannot, on its own, cause your child to develop mental health conditions.

Risk Factors

Risk factors increase the likelihood of your child developing mental health conditions and may be amplified by the inappropriate use of technology or social media.

- Traits/temperament, e.g. being naturally more sensitive
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Hormonal changes due to puberty



Biological Factors

- Issues with self-esteem
- Negative worldview, e.g. seeing the world as a threatening or hopeless place
- Fear of failure



Psychological Factors

- Financial stressors in the family
- Lack of access to support and resources



Social Factors

Protective Factors

Protective factors shield the effects of risk factors and enhance your child's well-being.

- Healthy diet
- Exercise
- Sleep

- Healthy self-esteem
- Ability to understand and express emotions
- Good coping skills
- Good problem-solving skills
- Feeling secure and supported by parents

- Supportive and reliable relationships with family, significant adults (e.g. teachers), and peers
- Financial security
- Access to resources
- Willingness to seek help

Stressful Life Events

- Traumatic experiences, e.g. abuse, natural disasters, accidents
- Parental separation
- Conflict with peers or at home
- Life-threatening illness
- Recent loss of a loved one





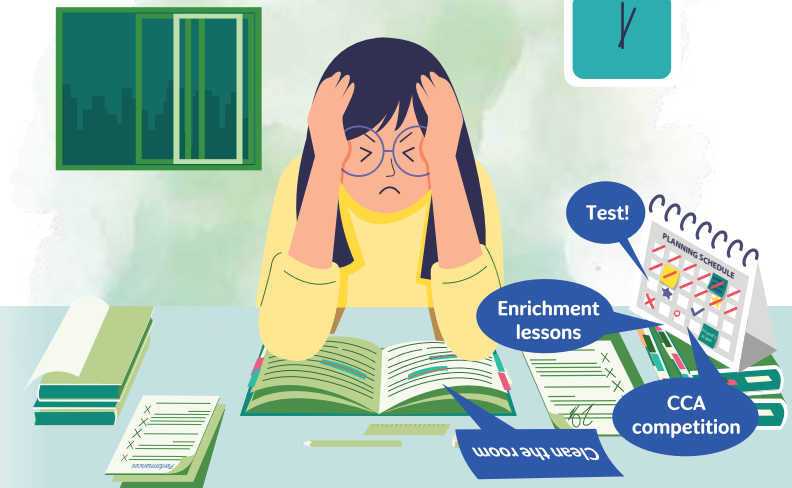
When To Be Concerned About Stress and Distress?



Stress is a normal response to everyday pressures and is a part of daily life. We might experience stress depending on how we react to our responsibilities, decisions and relationships. Some stress can help us to stay focused and motivated.



Stress can turn into distress when we experience or witness an event that is overly threatening and challenging, which overwhelms our ability to cope.



Look out for **D.I.S.T.R.E.S.S.** signs so that you can provide timely support for your child:



Deliberately avoiding others



Increased irritability, restlessness, agitation, stress, and anxiety



Sending or posting moody messages on social media



Talking about death or dying



Reacting differently or losing interest in things they used to enjoy



Eating more than usual or having a significantly smaller appetite



Sleep pattern changes, such as difficulty falling asleep or oversleeping



Slowing down of energy levels



D.I.S.T.R.E.S.S. signs are just a guide and are not meant to replace professional advice. Scan the QR code at the top right corner for more information on signs of common mental health conditions to look out for.

Note: Some children may be able to complete daily tasks, or even excel in them, while feeling down, worthless and hopeless for an extended period. It does not mean that they do not need help or are faking it. Your child's difficulties can be a cause for concern, even if they do not exhibit any outward signs.



When To Be Concerned About Stress and Distress?



How to show concern when your child is distressed?

If you notice your child displaying **D.I.S.T.R.E.S.S.** signs, initiate a conversation to understand what they are going through.

When poor mental health seems persistent and is affecting your child's everyday life, it is important to seek help from a school counsellor or a mental health professional.

1 Assure your child that you are there for them.



- “I know it has been a hard time for you. Whenever you are ready to share, I'm here to listen to you.”

2 Find out the cause of their struggles.



- “You don't seem to be your usual self and you look sad. I would like to know what you're struggling with. I'm here to listen. Please share more with me.”

3 Brainstorm possible solutions together. Role-play to help them to overcome their struggles.



- “Let's discuss how we can overcome <issue>. Share with me what you have tried before.”

4 If these solutions do not work and your child's distress persists for more than two weeks, speak to them about seeking professional help.



- “It must be so tough on you to still be struggling to cope. What do you think about speaking to your school counsellor?”



Supporting Your Child When They Are Feeling Anxious

Some level of stress can be motivating and helps us better prepare for situations. Feeling anxious is a normal reaction to stress. However, it is good to find out if your child is coping well. Try using conversation starters such as, "You seem anxious. Let's talk about it."

If your child expresses that they are having difficulty coping with anxiety, you can try these tips:



Encourage your child to take slow, deep breaths.

Imagine your lungs are two balloons filled with air. Breathe in slowly and deeply to expand your lungs, and breathe out slowly to let all the air out.



Acknowledge your child's struggles and **encourage them to express their worries** through drawing or writing if they find it difficult to talk about it.

Sometimes, it is hard to talk about our troubles. Let's try drawing or writing down your worries instead.



Break down the situation with your child to understand the cause of their fear or anxiety.

Could you share with me which part of the <situation> scares you?



Discuss possible ways to approach the situation while reminding them to continue trying other options if their chosen option does not work.

Every attempt is a learning experience. What are the different solutions that we can explore?



Guide your child to focus on what they can control and let go of what they cannot control.

This problem feels large and overwhelming. Which parts of it are under your control and you can do something to solve it? Clear your mind of the worries outside your control by writing them down and crossing them out.



Role model and share with your child how you cope with your stress and anxiety.

When I approach a scary situation, I start with addressing the simplest part of the problem.



Take a step back and let your child figure things out for themselves while remaining close so they can reach out for help if they need it.

It sounds like you have a workable solution in mind. Let me know if you need any help with it.



Encourage your child to try new things, and assure them that they have your support.

Let's try <new thing> together! I am here to support you.



Supporting Your Child When They Are Feeling Sad

It is normal for your child to feel sad or down from time to time, especially when they experience challenging situations.

Look out for signs of low mood and distress (e.g. irregular eating and sleeping habits or social withdrawal). If your child experiences these signs most of the time for more than two weeks, you may want to try these tips:



1 Make time to listen and understand what your child is experiencing. Let them know you are concerned about them and want to be there for them.

You seem to be down. How long have you been feeling this way? What's troubling you?



5A Guide your child to identify and acknowledge unhelpful thoughts through exploring whether these thoughts are true, and whether there could be alternative explanations.

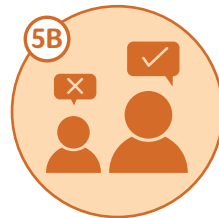
E.g. if your child expresses that they can never do well in exams, acknowledge their thoughts and feelings. Then guide them to challenge these thoughts.

I hear a lot of negative thoughts, like thinking you're not good enough. What makes you say that? Do you have anything that confirms or challenges this thought?



2 Listen attentively and keep an open mind. Sometimes, instead of advice, what your child needs is a listening ear.

Thanks for sharing this with me. It makes sense why that would make you feel down.



5B After identifying and acknowledging these unhelpful thoughts, guide your child to replace them with helpful thoughts to encourage them to learn from their experiences.

What is a more helpful thought to replace that negative thought? What would you say to a friend who is struggling with a similar issue?



3 Explore with your child possible ways to solve the problem or make things better.

Let's figure this out together by breaking the problem down into smaller parts.



4 Encourage your child to connect with others and pursue hobbies or activities that are meaningful to them.

Shall we go to the pop-up event that you were interested in this weekend?





Understanding Barriers to Reaching Out for Support



Seeking help is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it is a **sign of resilience and courage** that promotes **better recovery**. This not only includes seeking professional help but also reaching out to parents, trusted adults (e.g. teachers, school counsellors), and friends.



At times, your child may not feel comfortable seeking help or sharing their feelings with you due to the following reasons:



1 They feel embarrassed or worried that others may judge them.



3 They think that nothing or no one can help.



2 They have had previous bad experiences when they tried seeking help.



4 They do not realise the seriousness of their problems.

If you sense that your child may be hiding their feelings, trust your gut and initiate a conversation to better understand your child's specific reasons for not sharing what they are feeling. This will enable you to understand their concerns and better support them.

Let your child know that you are concerned and want to help. Sit in a relaxed position and maintain eye contact.

I've noticed you seem <sad/distant/not your usual self>. What's making it difficult for you to share about what's on your mind?



If your child shares anything about harming themselves or being harmed, seek your child's agreement to share this information with a professional so that you can better support your child.

Let your child know that you can work through options to seek help together. You can offer to make an appointment and accompany your child, if they are open to it.

Talking to other people may feel uncomfortable or scary, but your safety is important to us. What do you think about talking to a professional about this? I will be with you every step of the way.





Addressing Barriers to Reaching Out for Support

Here are clarifications to the concerns you and other parents may have:

You may think...



I don't want others to treat my child differently.



I don't want my child to have a mental health record that might negatively affect their future.



I don't know if mental health treatment will work for my child.



I don't want my child to suffer from the side effects caused by medication.

In reality...

- **Receiving professional help is key to preventing mental health concerns from worsening.**
- Your child's needs should be your **first priority**.
- The opinions of others should not prevent you from ensuring that your child gets the right support they need.
- Government policies and guidelines require **fair hiring practices** for all, including those with mental health conditions.
- Agencies are educating employers to ensure that they understand and follow these guidelines.
- The mental health professional will involve you in **discussions on your child's treatment options and answer any questions that you or your child may have.**
- This helps to ensure that the treatment is **suitable** and **effective** for your child.
- Medication is not always necessary.
- If prescribed, your child should **follow the recommended treatment plan.**
- The mental health professional will advise you on possible side effects and how to manage them.
- This treatment plan will be adjusted according to your child's needs.



Addressing Barriers to Reaching Out for Support

Here are clarifications to the concerns you and other parents may have:

You may think...



I'm concerned about the cost of mental health treatment.

In reality...

- Your service provider will advise you on the estimated cost of mental health treatment upon assessment of your child's needs.
- There are **subsidies and schemes available to make treatment more affordable.**

The way you spend quality time with your child is more important than how much time you spend together.

Here are some ways to help your child feel supported:



I want to help my child, but I don't have the time / I don't know how to.



Make time for your child and let them know that you are there for them.

If you are unable to speak with them when they approach you, let them know that you want to listen to them and provide a specific time to have a conversation.



Put aside distractions, such as mobile devices, **during mealtimes.** Use these opportunities to **engage your child and have conversations** instead.



Set aside at least 5 to 15 minutes a day (e.g. before bedtime) **to spend 1-on-1 time with your child**, talk about their day and listen to any concerns they may have.



Mental Health Support and Services in Singapore



Under the **Tiered Care Model** in the National Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, there are various mental health services available in Singapore to meet different levels of needs. This table provides an overview of the tiers, and what you can expect from each of them.



	Tier 1 Mental Well-being Promotion	Tier 2 Low Intensity Services	Tier 3 Moderate Intensity Services	Tier 4 High Intensity Services
<i>Who Will Benefit?</i>	Individuals with no or minimal mental health symptoms	Individuals with mild mental health symptoms	Individuals with moderate mental health symptoms	Individuals with severe mental health symptoms
<i>Objective</i>	To maintain mental well-being and prevent the development of mental health conditions	To facilitate coping and prevent the escalation of symptoms	To reduce the severity of symptoms	To reduce the severity of symptoms and stabilise chronic mental health conditions
<i>Examples of Interventions / Resources Provided</i>	• School curriculum to build mental well-being and resilience • Public education and self-help (e.g. mindline.sg, MindSG, SG Mental Well-Being Network) • Parenting/Peer/Community support • Workplace mental well-being support	• Mental health needs detection services • Counselling • Stress and anxiety management, social skills training, behaviour management	• Mental health assessment • Psychotherapy (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) • Medical treatment	• Psychiatric assessment and diagnosis • Specialised and longer-term psychological interventions • Medical treatment • Emergency services



Read on to find out more about the specific resources you can access.



Mental Health Support and Services in Singapore



Early help-seeking is linked to better mental health outcomes. Apart from seeking help for your child, be aware of your own needs and seek help if you are struggling with your own mental health.



mindline.sg

At mindline.sg, you can find support and resources on mental health and well-being.



Other resources are listed below for your reference. Please note that this list is non-exhaustive.



Online resources



MindSG

For tools, tips, and resources to help you understand and manage the health and well-being for you or your child, scan the QR code.



In-person services



To find resources that match your needs near you, scan the QR code to use the **Community Mental Health (CMH) Wayfinding Tool**.



This QR code links to a **more comprehensive list** of mental health services.



Hotlines and chatlines

If you or your child feel in need of a safe space and would like a listening ear, these helplines are available:

- Institute of Mental Health (IMH)'s Mental Health Helpline (24 hours): **6389 2222**
- Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) (24 hours): **1-767 (1-SOS)**
- Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) (Mon-Fri 9 am-6 pm, excluding public holidays): **1800 283 7019**
- TOUCHline (Counselling) (Mon-Fri 9 am-6 pm): **1800 377 2252**
- Care Corner Counselling Centre (Mandarin) (10 am-10 pm, excluding public holidays): **1800 3535 800**

If you or your child would like support in specific areas of concern (e.g. gaming, cyber addiction, other forms of addiction), you can call these helplines:

- Help123 by TOUCH Community Services, Singapore's One-Stop Cyber Wellness Hotline (Mon-Fri 9 am-6 pm, excluding public holidays): **1800 6123 123**
- National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) All Addictions Helpline (8.30 am-9 pm): **6-732 6837 (6-RECOVER)**



Mental Health Support and Services in Singapore

You are not alone in this journey of supporting your child. There is an ecosystem of support available, and professionals will work together to ensure your child receives the most appropriate and coordinated support.



Clinical Psychologists

- Provide psychological assessments, diagnosis and psychological interventions for various mental health conditions.
- Provide a safe space for clients to effectively address their mental health conditions and offer guidance and coping skills.
- Refer to psychiatrists if they deem that medical treatment is needed.



GPs and Psychiatrists

General Practitioners (GPs):

- Diagnose and work alongside other mental health professionals to manage clients with mental health and physical health conditions.
- Refer high risk clients to other medical, psychiatry and allied health services when required to help better manage conditions.

Psychiatrists:

- Diagnose mental health conditions and manage treatment, which may include prescribing medication if needed.
- Make referrals to psychologists for psychological interventions.



Social Workers

- Assist clients and families to recognise social reasons for mental distress and support them through therapies.
- Assist low-income and/or vulnerable clients and families with financial assessment.
- Partner with other agencies to assist clients with all their other needs.



Counsellors

- Provide counselling and help clients develop coping skills.
- Guide clients on how to access resources, and tap on support services for multifaceted issues.
- If needed, they will talk to family members or caregivers to better support the clients.



Caring for Yourself

It can be easy to neglect your own physical, mental and emotional well-being when you are overly focused on caring for your child.

Remember – **the best way to care for your child is to first ensure that you take good care of yourself.** Self-care is not selfish, and “me time” is important.

Here are some ways that you can engage in self-care:

Consider what self-care looks like for you

1



Physical

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthily
- Exercising

2



Emotional

- Managing stress healthily
- Engage in a hobby
- Journaling

3



Social/Relational

- Spending quality time with loved ones
- Asking for support

Take breaks



Set aside some time to recharge. It can be as little as taking the time to listen to your favourite song.

Watch your media consumption



- Be careful of what you read and hear on the media daily, as it can impact your mood and mindset.
- Balance the negative news sources with positive ones by subscribing to uplifting media content.

Let go of tension



You can try the following to release tension in your body:

1. Sit in a quiet place with your eyes closed.
2. Take three deep breaths. Breathe in for three counts, and breathe out for five counts.
3. Squeeze your hands into fists, then slowly release your fists to let go of the tension in your hands.
4. Take three more deep breaths.
5. Move your shoulders up towards your ears, then relax.
6. Take three deep breaths.



Caring for Yourself



Be aware of and understand your feelings and reactions



Acknowledge your feelings and do not blame yourself when things do not go as planned.



Take a moment to think about what might be making you feel negatively about yourself. Ask yourself what worked well in a situation, and what could have been done differently.



Seek help and support from the people that you trust, if needed.



Monitor for possible signs of distress in yourself.



If you find that you have been struggling and feeling distressed despite seeking support from those around you, consider seeking help from a mental health professional.

Discuss your experiences with other parents



If you are feeling discouraged or lost, speak to other parents to hear their experiences and tips. Here are a few avenues for you to connect with other parents:

- Approach your child's school to join the Parent Support Group (PSG).
- For community support groups, you can find out more about the 'Families for Life' online community for parents by scanning this QR code.
- For fathers, you can find out more about 'DADs for Life' support groups by scanning the QR code or emailing cff@fathers.com.sg to join a group.
- For mothers, you can find out more about 'MUMs for Life' support groups by scanning the QR code or emailing connect@mumsforlife.sg to join a group.





Navigating the Digital Age



Social Media: Is Your Child Ready for It?

While social media platforms allow people to connect with others, constant exposure to social media content can make us feel anxious or overwhelmed. It is important for social media users to be mature enough to navigate such feelings when using these platforms. Most social media platforms require users to be aged 13 years and above. **However, is age the only consideration in determining if your child is ready?**



The *maturity* of your child is also an important consideration to determine their readiness for social media.

Maturity can be assessed by observing the following:

- Their ability to make responsible decisions to keep themselves safe online.
- Their ability to manage the pressures and feelings that come with social media use.
- Their ability to control impulses.

Although your child may pick up skills to use social media quickly, they may not fully understand how to use complicated online safety tools and settings. They may also not understand how the platforms' safety features work.

✓ Things You Can Do

Before allowing your child access to social media, have open conversations with them on the risks of social media and establish clear ground rules on how to keep themselves safe when using it. Here are some suggested topics:

What are some potential dangers of oversharing personal information?

What does healthy social media use look like?

How do we keep ourselves safe on social media?

What are some ground rules we can establish as a family?



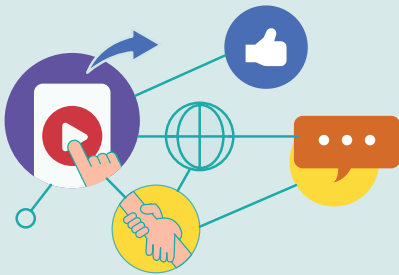
Social Media: Positive and Negative Impact on Youths' Well-Being



Potential Benefits of Social Media Use

When used in a healthy way, social media can offer benefits such as enriching learning experiences and making it easy to stay connected with friends and family.

Social Connections and Support



Social media allows youths to connect with others who share common interests and experiences from all over the world. Online social support can also buffer against stress and anxiety for youths while fostering their social and emotional resilience.

Learn More About the World



Social media can be a valuable source of information and provide platforms to share a variety of views on a wide range of topics and social issues. This can offer opportunities for youths to develop greater awareness of viewpoints beyond their own.

Creativity and Self-Expression



Social media allows youths to express themselves freely. This empowers them to develop their skills, receive validation and gain recognition for their talents, which build confidence and develop their self-identity.

Entertainment



Social media is full of creative and engaging content which can be a good source of entertainment and relaxation.



Social Media: Positive and Negative Impact on Youths' Well-Being



Concerns Related to Social Media Use

Use of social media without regulation or supervision can increase your child's risk of distress, where they may be overwhelmed and unable to cope with their emotions. As parents, it is critical to look beyond the amount of time your child is spending on social media, and try to understand their actions and experiences.

Greater Impact on Vulnerable Individuals

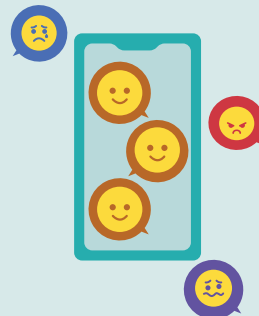
For those who are already struggling with existing mental health concerns, social media use can affect them more than others. For example, a person experiencing depression or negative body image may be exposed to content that reinforces their low self-worth. They may also see the curated versions of their friends' lives and feel insecure about their own lives.

Lower Self-Esteem



On social media, people usually show highly curated and idealised photos or videos of themselves, which may not be a true reflection of their daily lives. Constant exposure to such content can make youths feel bad about themselves as they struggle to meet such unrealistic standards.

Limited Perspectives



With social media's algorithms, youths are often fed content that matches their interests in order to keep them engaged online. As such, they may not be exposed to multiple perspectives and information that could broaden their understanding and help them develop more balanced viewpoints.

Insufficient Sleep



Youths may find it difficult to disengage from social media at night due to anxiety about missing out on something interesting or exciting that others might be experiencing.

Risk of Exposure to Cyberbullying



Cyberbullying may be more common on social media due to anonymity, resulting in significant distress and potentially poorer mental health in affected youths.



To Sharent or Not?



Sharenting refers to the action of sharing photos or videos of your child online, leaving a trail of information.

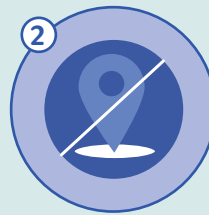
What is posted online remains online. It is almost impossible to permanently delete information from the Internet once you have shared it.

✓ **If you choose to share content about your child online, here are some things you can consider to help you sharent responsibly:**



1 Privacy

Adjust your privacy settings on social media and allow only trusted audiences to view your posts.



2 Safety

Do not post personal information or location-tagged photos, as these can reveal your child's location. Such information can make your child more vulnerable to online sexual grooming or online scams.



3 Appropriateness

Before posting, ask yourself if your child would feel embarrassed or upset if they were to see your post, now or in the future.



4 Digital Footprints

When you upload photos or videos of your child, avoid tagging them to prevent the photos or videos from being traced back to them.

Alternatively, you can explore other ways of storing your memories, such as scrapbooking, writing postcards, and private sharing over secured online platforms with close family and friends.



Entering Your Child's Gaming World

Online games, when played appropriately, can be opportunities for your child to practise and develop skills such as teamwork, concentration, communication and problem-solving skills.

Playing games also allows your child to receive a mix of intrinsic rewards (e.g. feeling good about their abilities and effort) and extrinsic rewards (e.g. receiving game currency or points) when they succeed. **However, excessive online gaming has pitfalls that you should be aware of.**



If you're worried about how much time your child spends gaming, talk to them about it. Work together to develop a plan to balance gaming with other screen-free activities. Check in regularly with your child to review the plan.

⚠ Excessive online gaming may increase the risk of:



Cyberbullying



Attracting unwanted attention online



Excessive in-app purchases



Increased levels of anxiety due to the competitive nature of the game

🗨 Things You Can Say

Use these conversation starters to find out more about the games that your child plays, as well as to ask them to reflect on their gaming habits.

- 1 Ask about a game that your child seems to be playing frequently.

What's this game about?

- 2 Involve your child in setting rules and expectations for when they can play games, for how long, and the consequence of not following the agreed-upon rules.

Let's discuss what would happen if anyone breaks the rules.

- 3 Prompt your child to think about the benefits and risks of gaming.

Do you chat with strangers you've just met while playing online games?

By understanding how games are designed to encourage your child to keep playing, and the potential pitfalls, you can approach conversations about games more empathetically. This will help you build a positive and healthy relationship with your child.



If their gaming habits continue to be a cause for concern, you may wish to seek help from their school or from community partners such as **Help123 by TOUCH Community Services, Singapore's One-Stop Cyber Wellness Hotline at 1800 6123 123.**



Device Use: Too Much or Just Right?

Screen time refers to the amount of time spent using devices each day. Having some screen time can be beneficial, such as when your child uses devices to learn and connect with others. However, it is important to be aware that **spending an excessive amount of time using devices is unhealthy**, as it is associated with insufficient good quality sleep, sedentary behaviours, increased obesity, and poorer mental health and well-being.

These potential negative consequences are linked to the extent to which the use of devices displaces activities that are important for your child's development. E.g. sleeping, being physically active, or engaging in face-to-face interactions with family and friends.

It is important to ensure your child maintains a healthy balance of age-appropriate activities.



How to help your child achieve balanced screen time?

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand what they do online.

Discuss and develop a timetable with your child to moderate their time spent on screens. Children aged 7 - 12 should have consistent screen time limits. Parental control settings can be used to monitor and limit screen time as agreed with the child.

What do you think is a reasonable amount of time to spend on your phone for leisure?

What responsibilities do you have to complete before spending time on your device?



Knowing what your child is doing online is important too

Beyond setting limits on your child's screen time, it is important to understand how your child is using their devices and what content they are watching as these can impact their well-being.

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand their screen use habits. Here are some example questions you may wish to consider:

- “That video you just watched looks interesting. Can you tell me what it is about?”
- “Do you mindlessly scroll through social media, or binge-watch videos or shows on streaming platforms? What could be a better use of your time that doesn't involve devices? Can we do something together?”
- “Is the online activity you are doing for learning or leisure? How long do you need to complete the activity? Let's agree on a time to stop.”
- “What do you usually do online? Have you ever come across any inappropriate content that made you feel uncomfortable? Which aspects made you uncomfortable?”



Scan QR code to download the Ministry of Health's Guidance on Screen Use in Children for more information.





Helping Your Child Manage Device Use & Stay Safe Online



Develop a Family Screen Use Plan

- A family screen use plan consists of screen use rules, their consequences and screen-free activities that the family can engage in.
- As a family, create your screen use rules by discussing and agreeing on expectations of screen use and the consequences of breaking these rules clearly.

Your screen use rules can include:



Device-free times and places



Time limit for devices

- “What are some suggestions on when and where devices should not be used?”
- “What should we do if we break our agreement?”
- Decide as a family what screen-free activities you want to engage in, like going outdoors, playing sports or playing board games together.
 - “What screen-free activities do you think we can do together?”
- Engaging your child in the process of creating screen use rules and inviting them to suggest activities to do together helps increase their ownership of the whole family screen use plan.
 - “What do you think of our screen use rules?”



Role Model Behaviours and Have Open Conversations

- Be consistent in role modelling positive screen use behaviours and habits.
- Engage your child in open conversations about their online activities, how to navigate the online space and its associated challenges. For example:
 - State observation: **“I noticed you have been spending a lot of time on your device.”**
 - Ask open-ended questions: **“What do you usually do on your device?”**





Helping Your Child Manage Device Use & Stay Safe Online



Use Parental Controls

- Parental controls refer to a group of settings that put you in control of what your child can see and do on a device or online. Such controls can allow you to supervise and monitor your child's online activities and protect them from inappropriate content, online sexual grooming, cyberbullying and other online risks.

Do note that these controls should not be the only method used to restrict your child's online activity.

- If you are using any parental controls and online safety features to manage or monitor your child's devices, you should have a conversation with them first.

Let them know:



You care for them and want them to be safe online.



Why there is a need to put these parental controls in place.



How the parental controls keep them safe.



Disable Incognito Mode and Enable Web Content Filters

Private browsing features can minimise your child's digital footprint, but they also allow your child to hide their exposure to inappropriate content. Consider disabling incognito mode and enabling web content filters.



Having open conversations about the use of parental controls, disabling private browsing or adjusting any settings on your child's devices is important so that your child understands your intentions. This enables you to better support them as they navigate the online space.

You can find out more information about how you can help your child stay safe online by scanning this QR code.





Creating a Positive Presence Online with T.H.I.N.K. and S.U.R.E.!



Guide your child to **T.H.I.N.K.** before posting and to be **S.U.R.E.** while they navigate the online space and interact with others.



T.H.I.N.K.

T.H.I.N.K. stands for **T**hroughful, **H**elpful, **I**nspiring, **N**ecessary, and **K**ind.

Ask your child if what they are about to post online is:



Throughful?



Helpful?



Inspiring?



Necessary?



Kind?



If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No', they should not post the content online, even if it is intended for their private social media account or private group chat.

By guiding your child to make it a habit to **T.H.I.N.K.** before posting anything online, your child learns to be kind and avoids hurting others with their online behaviour.



Creating a Positive Presence Online with T.H.I.N.K. and S.U.R.E.!



S.U.R.E.

S.U.R.E. stands for **S**ource, **U**nderstand, **R**esearch, and **E**valuate.

Guide your child to always be **S.U.R.E.** about the information they come across online before sharing it with others.



1 Source: Check the trustworthiness of the source of information.

- “Did the information come from credible sources such as people or organisations well-regarded for their expertise in specific areas?”



2 Understand: Understand what the information is about and check if it contains facts and/or opinions.

- “Is the information a fact or someone’s point of view? If it is someone’s opinion, is it reliable?”



3 Research: Research and dig deeper for different trustworthy sources to cross-check the accuracy of the information.

- “Is the information consistent with other trustworthy sources?”



4 Evaluate: Look at the information from different angles before deciding if it is trustworthy.

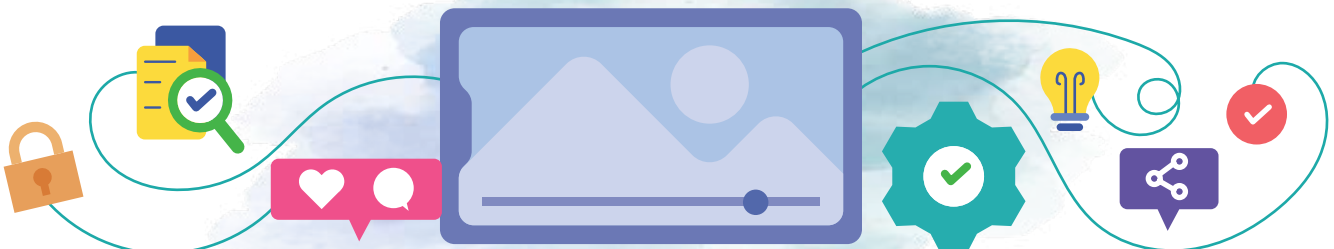
- “Based on what you have learned from the earlier questions, do you think the information is true? Should you share it with your friends and loved ones?”

By guiding your child to make it a habit to be **S.U.R.E.**, your child learns the importance of verifying information before sharing it with others. This reduces the spread of misinformation.

* S.U.R.E. is part of the National Library Board’s Information Literacy programme.



You can find out more about S.U.R.E. by scanning this QR code.





Helping Your Child Thrive in the Online Space



It is important to help your child understand that not everyone holds the same point of view as them. To help them navigate these differing viewpoints, you can guide them to express their opinions confidently online while respecting others' opinions. This will help them contribute to a healthy online community.

✓ Things You Can Do



Encourage your child to keep an open mind and provide opportunities for them to access information that would enable them to consider issues from multiple perspectives.

Why do you think they said that?

If you were in their shoes, would you agree with their opinion?

Consider the issue from another perspective by applying **S.U.R.E.** (Source, Understand, Research, and Evaluate).



When your child is responding to another person online, encourage them to exercise empathy and respect. If you notice that your child is engaging in negative behaviours (e.g. sending unkind messages), correct them and help them to understand why their actions are wrong.

Is your message respectful and empathetic?

Consider the issue from another perspective by practising **T.H.I.N.K.** (Truthful, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind).



Posts with negative comments may upset your child, even if they are not directed towards them. Encourage your child to share their thoughts and feelings about these comments with you or a trusted adult.

How do these comments make you feel?

It's okay to feel upset. It's also okay not to respond to these comments. Shall we turn off the comments and notifications and do something else for now?

* S.U.R.E. is part of the National Library Board's Information Literacy programme.



Cyberbullying: When Your Child is the Victim

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs when online technology is used as a means to hurt or upset someone on purpose and repeatedly*.

Sometimes, victims of cyberbullying do not share what they are going through with adults. It is important to watch out for signs and have conversations with your child to find out more and understand what they are experiencing.

* Sharing or resurfacing a single post is also a form of repetition.

I am here
for you.



Cyberbullying can take the form of:



Insulting the victim



Uploading content (e.g. photos, videos) intended to cause distress to the victim



Excluding the victim from an online group



Signs that your child is being cyberbullied:

Sudden changes in
temperament



Becomes upset or anxious, especially when receiving messages or using devices.

Social withdrawal



Becomes less sociable than usual around family and friends.

Changes in daily activities



Spends less time on the activities they used to enjoy.



Cyberbullying: When Your Child is the Victim

🗨️ Things you can do if your child is exhibiting signs of being cyberbullied:

Have a conversation with your child to understand what they are experiencing. Maintaining open communication provides your child with assurance that they have a support network that they can depend on.

You can use **C.H.E.E.R.** to help guide your conversation.



Calm them down

Speak in a gentle tone.



You seem upset. Let's sit down and talk about it.



Hear them out

Lend them a listening ear.



It can be difficult to talk about being bullied. I want to understand how it's been for you so we can figure out what we can do together.



Empathise with their feelings

Acknowledge their feelings.



I see that you have been hurt by their actions. How about using I-Messages* to let them know that you are upset by what they posted? Sharing how you feel may help resolve any misunderstandings.



Encourage them to seek help

If it seems that the problem is beyond what your child can manage on their own, recommend reaching out for additional support.



It seems like this has been going on for a while and is bothering you a lot. Let's get some help to resolve the matter.



Reassure them

Let them know that you will always be there to support them and listen to their problems.



I'm always here for you. If this happens again or whenever you feel bothered by it, I'm here to listen.

Your child may not want to talk about their problem if they are afraid of getting someone else into trouble, or if they feel that confiding in someone may make the bullying worse. Reassure them that you only wish to have a better understanding of the situation so that you can keep them safe.

* I-Messages are used to communicate one's feelings and needs to others clearly and respectfully. For example, "I felt upset [feeling] when you posted that photograph of me making a funny face together with a caption that made me look silly [upsetting action]. I would need you to remove the photo, please [suggested solution]."



Cyberbullying: When Your Child is the Victim

How can your child deal with cyberbullying?

Introduce the **Stop, Save, Block, Tell, Report** strategy to your child to help them better deal with cyberbullying incidents.



Stop

Ask your child to STOP engaging in online activities that make them feel uncomfortable or hurt.



Save

Ask your child to SAVE and share all offensive content (e.g. emails, instant messages, text messages, videos or photos) with a trusted adult. This can be kept as evidence of cyberbullying, should there be a need to take action in the future.



Block

Ask your child to cut off all communication with the cyberbully. They can consider using available features to BLOCK specific people in their contacts.



Tell

Affirm your child when they TELL you about the situation.



Report

Guide your child in using social media self-reporting features to combat the cyberbullying and online harassment. If their personal safety or reputation is threatened, REPORT the case to the police together. Inform your child's school of the situation so that support can be given in school.



Cyberbullying: When Your Child is the Bully

If you suspect that your child is cyberbullying others, remain calm and try to find out more from them.

✓ How can you manage the issue?



Ask questions

Try to gain a better understanding of what happened and their reasons for acting in that way.

What was going through your mind during that incident?

Why did you choose to act this way?
Was there a better way for you to approach the situation?



Let them know bullying is unacceptable

It is important for your child to understand that bullying is harmful. Remind your child of the importance of upholding good values and showing care and support for others.

You can use I-Messages* to discuss the situation and let your child know how you feel about their behaviour.

I feel disappointed that you posted mean things about your classmate. How would your classmate feel about this? How would you feel if the same thing happened to you?

I am glad you realise that it is not right to bully others. Let's discuss how you can make the situation better. Would you consider apologising to the person you have hurt? What else can you do?



Explain and enforce consequences for their behaviour

In addition to apologising to the victim, other consequences may include taking away their phones or all devices for a specified duration of time. Be firm and follow through on the consequences.



Monitor your child's online activities

To ensure that your child does not continue or repeat their bullying behaviour, monitor your child's activities online (e.g. their text messages, social media posts and interactions with others). You can use in-app parental controls or safety features to aid you.



Reach out for extra support

If necessary, you can approach your child's school for additional support and guidance.

* I-Messages are used to communicate one's feelings and needs to others clearly and respectfully. For example, "I felt upset [feeling] when you posted that photograph of me making a funny face together with a caption that made me look silly [upsetting action]. I would need you to remove the photo, please [suggested solution]."



Online Risk: Unwanted Attention



Online sexual grooming is the act of building up a trusting and emotional relationship with a minor (under 16 years old), usually with the purpose of tricking or coercing them into engaging in sexual acts.

Your child could encounter unwanted attention or become a target for online sexual grooming. Be aware of these risks, recognise warning signs and maintain open communication with your child to protect them from these online threats.

How can you identify online sexual grooming?

Your child may be sexually groomed online if you observe that they:



Possess expensive gifts like clothes or mobile phones, which you know they cannot afford



Use sexual language that you do not expect them to know



Are excessively secretive about their online interactions with others



Are extremely resistant to letting you go through their online conversations

How can you keep your child safe from strangers online?

As it is impossible to know one's true identity or motives online, it is important that your child be cautious when interacting with strangers online. You can guide your child to be safe online by advising them to:



Only chat and play online games with friends they know in person.



Exit online conversations and inform a trusted adult immediately when someone makes them feel uncomfortable, asks for personal information or requests to meet up in person.

✓ If you suspect that your child is a target of online sexual grooming, you can further protect them by:



1 Staying calm

Listen carefully to what your child is saying and let them know they have done the right thing by telling you.



2 Assuring your child

Let your child know that you are there for them and will not punish them being in this situation.



3 Collecting evidence

Take screenshots of the online interactions between your child and the online predator.



4 Lodging a police report

Make a police report immediately if you are sure that your child has been exposed to online sexual grooming.



Online Risk: Exposure to Inappropriate Content

Inappropriate online content is content that is not age-appropriate and may make your child feel uncomfortable or distressed. Such content may contain misleading information that may deceive your child or encourage them to engage in behaviours that are criminal or dangerous.



Have regular conversations with your child to find out what they are doing online and let them know that they can always come to you if they come across content that makes them feel uncomfortable, unsure or distressed.

What should your child do if they come across inappropriate content online?

Examples of Inappropriate Content

Content containing offensive or inflammatory language.

Sites encouraging vandalism, crime, terrorism, racism, eating disorders, self-harm or suicide.

Photos, videos or games which show images of violence or cruelty towards other people and/or animals.

Actions to Take



Report and block the content

Report content which violates the Community Guidelines of the social media platform providers.



Close the browsing tab

Quit the browser or close the browsing tab immediately to stop viewing inappropriate content.



Talk to a trusted adult

Share what they saw and how they felt after viewing it with a trusted adult.

✓ How can you reduce your child's exposure to inappropriate content?

Aside from using parental controls, you can ensure that:

- 1 When they search for information online, they are using a browser which has the safety tool turned on to filter out explicit search results.
- 2 They set their privacy settings to "Contacts Only" for wireless sharing and transferring of files between nearby devices. This prevents your child from receiving unsolicited file transfers from strangers.
- 3 Their social media account(s) only accept direct messages (DMs) from people they know. This ensures that messages from people they do not know or do not follow appear as message requests, allowing your child to review and decide if they wish to communicate with the requestor.



You can find out more information about how you can help your child stay safe online by scanning this QR code.

you've g♥t this!