



What is digital resilience?

Digital resilience is understanding when you may be at risk online, knowing what to do if something goes wrong, learning from your experiences of being online, and being able to recover from any difficulties or upsets.

This resource looks at how social media use can impact on children and young peoples' wellbeing and mental health and provides some guidance on how you can help.

The resilient child

Tony Newman, resilience expert and author of the book *What Works in Building Resilience?* defines a resilient child as one who:

“can resist adversity, cope with uncertainty and recover more successfully from traumatic events or episodes”

This ability to maintain positive wellbeing is acquired through experience, although there may be some inherited aspects. It is not about invulnerability, more a capacity to cope; continuous and extreme adversity is likely to drain even the most resilient of children.

The online world mirrors the real world, however, there are additional factors when using the internet, and building specific digital resilience is part of helping our children and young people become more resilient in general, to enhance their emotional and physical wellbeing.



How does social media use impact on children's wellbeing and mental health?

The more time someone spends online, the greater the likelihood of potential harm, and the 24/7 nature of the internet coupled with the far-reaching and sometimes faceless audience means that issues such as conflict and bullying have more of an impact than ever before.

However, not all young people who are vulnerable online appear so in other aspects of their lives, and online risks can be unexpected. Instant sharing of personal content, difficulties with retracting personal information, and the potential for misreading social situations and causing unintentional distress all create potential risks that can take young people by surprise.

What are young people's worries around social media?

The charity YoungMinds researched children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing online for its report *Resilience for the Digital World*. When young people were asked what worried them about social media, they answered:

- Hacking/fraud/identity theft
- Privacy (eg, family members or future employers seeing pictures)
- Procrastination, wasting time, becoming addicted
- Bullying
- Less social engagement in person
- Data being used/being spied on
- Negativity and “fakeness” of posts
- Communication without face-to-face contact is hard and overwhelming



The Office of the Children's Commissioner *Life in Likes* report describes how:

- Many Year 7 children find social media hard to manage, **becoming over-dependent on 'likes' and 'comments'** for social validation
- Young people become **increasingly anxious about online image** and 'keeping up appearances' as they get older. This can get worse when they start to follow celebrities and grows significantly upon starting secondary school
- Social media sites can undermine children's view of themselves by **making them feel inferior** to the people they follow
- Young people feel social **pressure to be constantly connected** at the expense of other activities – especially in secondary school where everyone has a phone and social media accounts
- Younger children use platforms that are not designed for them
- Primary age children especially worry about 'sharenting' – parents posting pictures of them on social media without their permission



What are the benefits and dangers of being online?

The Royal Society for Public Health *#Statusofmind* report asked nearly 1,500 young people aged 14-24 to score five of the most popular social media sites (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) on various criteria, and found that:

- There are proven benefits to social media; all sites received positive scores for self-identity, self-expression, community building and emotional support
- YouTube, in particular, scored highly for raising awareness of other people's health experiences and for decreasing respondents' levels of depression, anxiety and loneliness
- All social media sites received negative marks for sleep quality, bullying, body image and FOMO (fear of missing out)
- The two most image-centric platforms, Snapchat and Instagram, were ranked overall lowest for users' wellbeing



How can you **support** young people?

Professionals don't always feel that they hold the knowledge or skills to engage effectively with children and young people in their online social spaces. This means that children and young people's online lives often bypass the professional support that's available to them offline.

But most parents and professionals can no longer claim to be 'too old' or 'out of touch' with social media and the online world. It's everyday life for children and young people, and adults don't need to be tech-savvy to be able to discuss feelings, behaviour and consequences.

Our online **Digital Resilience training course** looks at the social aspect of how children and young people use the internet, and the risks attached, as well as looking at the impact of social media on emotional wellbeing.

It also includes strategies to help children and young people navigate the digital world and good practice for schools.

Our course costs just £18.50 to **buy online** or can be added to our **online learning service** for a very cost-effective rate.

Find out more –
educare.co.uk/courses/digital-resilience

