Nine strategies to help you support your teen in an online world

① Engage actively with your child's online interests

Why this matters: Showing an ongoing interest in your young person's online world makes it easier to have open conversations and guide them when needed.

How to implement:

› **Learn about their favourite apps and games:** Ask them to show you how their favourite games and apps work. The eSafety Commission's App Checklist can help you learn more about this too.

› **Join in when possible:** Play a game together or chat about what they are watching.

› **Have regular check-ins:** Talk about their online experiences, just as you ask about school or friends.

Try asking:

"I saw a really funny reel today about [details]. What made you laugh the most online today?"

"What do you like most about the game you are playing at the moment?"

"If you could design your own app or game, what would it be like?"

② Encourage a healthy balance between online and offline activities

Why this matters: Balancing online and offline activities supports teens' well–being, friendships, and sleep.

How to implement:

> **Encourage offline activities:** Help your young person find hobbies, sports, or social events they enjoy.

> **Set screen–free times:** Have times when no one at home is online, like at mealtimes or before bed.

> **Prioritise sleep:** Encourage 8-10 hours of sleep each night and keep devices out of the bedroom.

Try asking:

"How do you decide when it's time to log off?"

"What do you think helps you feel your best during the day?"

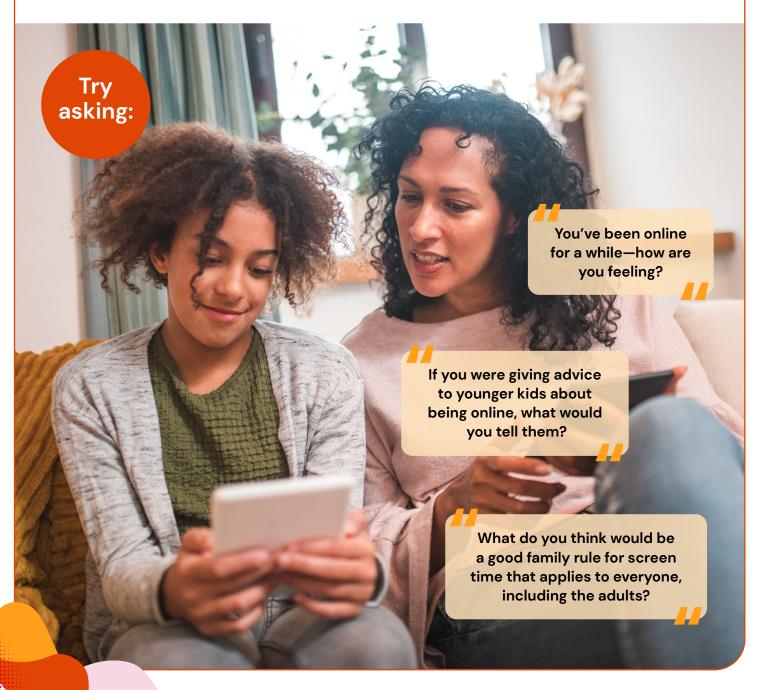"What's something you've done offline recently that you really enjoyed?"

③ Mentor rather than monitor

Why this matters: Teens respond better to non-judgemental guidance and open conversations than strict rules. Prioritising connection over control helps them feel safe coming to you for support.

How to implement:

> **Talk about online habits:** Ask questions and initiate discussions about your child's experiences. Share your own positive and negative experiences online.

> **Discuss safety together:** Approach online risks as something to navigate together. Co-create a safety plan rather than enforcing restrictions.

> **Model behaviour that you want to see:** Young people are more likely to follow rules if they see you doing the same.
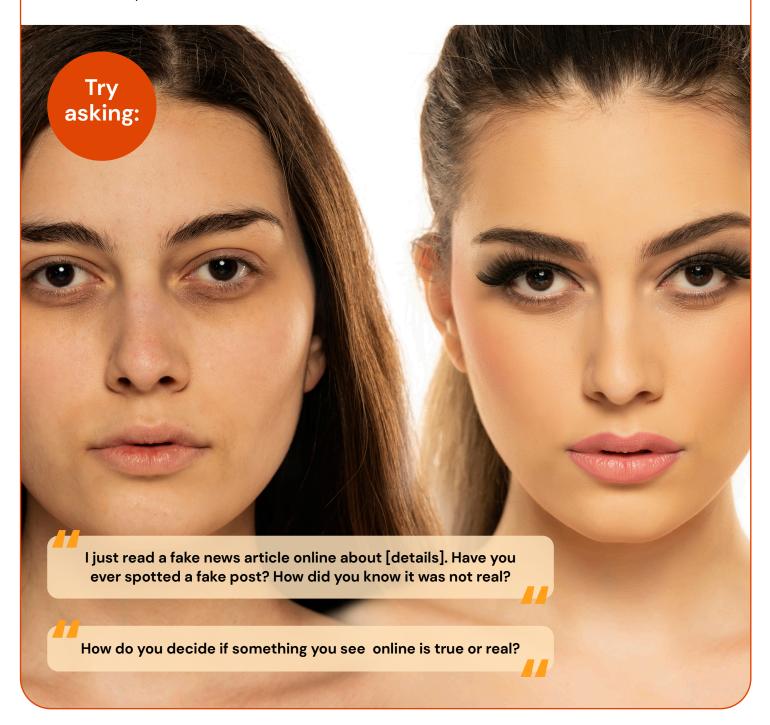
Try asking:

" You've been online for a while—how are you feeling?

" If you were giving advice to younger kids about being online, what would you tell them?

" What do you think would be a good family rule for screen time that applies to everyone, including the adults?

④ **Help your child think carefully about online content**

Why this matters: Teens need to learn how to spot misinformation online.

How to implement:

> **Encourage critical thinking:** Discuss who created the content your child enjoys.

> **Promote fact-checking:** Show them how to verify information using reliable sources.

> **Discuss the impact of misinformation:** Talk about how false information can spread fast online and cause real-world problems, like unnecessary panic, influencing elections, or spreading harmful health myths.

Try asking:

" I just read a fake news article online about [details]. Have you ever spotted a fake post? How did you know it was not real? "

" How do you decide if something you see online is true or real? "

⑤ Talk openly about sensitive topics

Why this matters: Teens need a safe and supportive parent or carer to talk to if something online worries them, for example, if they have been exposed to inappropriate content or online hate, encountered possible online predators, or shared their personal information online.

How to implement:

> **Bring up topics casually:** Initiate conversations about sensitive subjects in a relaxed way rather than making it a big deal.

> **Ask open-ended questions:** Make it easy for them to share their thoughts rather than just answering 'yes' or 'no.'

> **Reassure them they can always talk to you about anything:** Let them know that asking questions or making mistakes will not get them in trouble.

> **Work together to set safety rules at home.** Take advantage of parental controls to monitor and control content, based on your child's age and experience. Discuss with your child how best to do this.
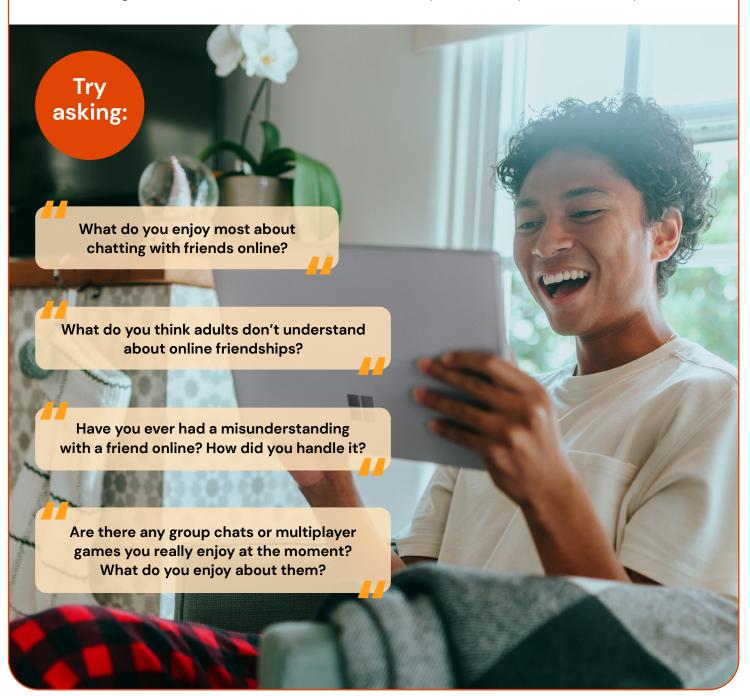
Try asking:

"If a friend experienced something upsetting online, how do you think you could help them?"

"What are some things you do to keep yourself safe online?"

"How do you decide what to share online and what to keep private?"

⑥ Support positive online social connections

Why this matters: Online friendships can be just as meaningful as in-person ones, providing support, connection, and belonging—especially for teens with special/niche interests or social anxiety.

How to implement:

› **Acknowledge their online friendships:** Show genuine interest in the people they connect with and what they enjoy about these online interactions.

› **Talk about online safety:** Help them think about privacy, boundaries, and handling tricky situations like online conflicts or misunderstandings.

› **Encourage a balance of online and offline social time:** Help them develop a mix of social experiences.

Try asking:

" What do you enjoy most about chatting with friends online?

" What do you think adults don't understand about online friendships?

" Have you ever had a misunderstanding with a friend online? How did you handle it?

" Are there any group chats or multiplayer games you really enjoy at the moment? What do you enjoy about them?
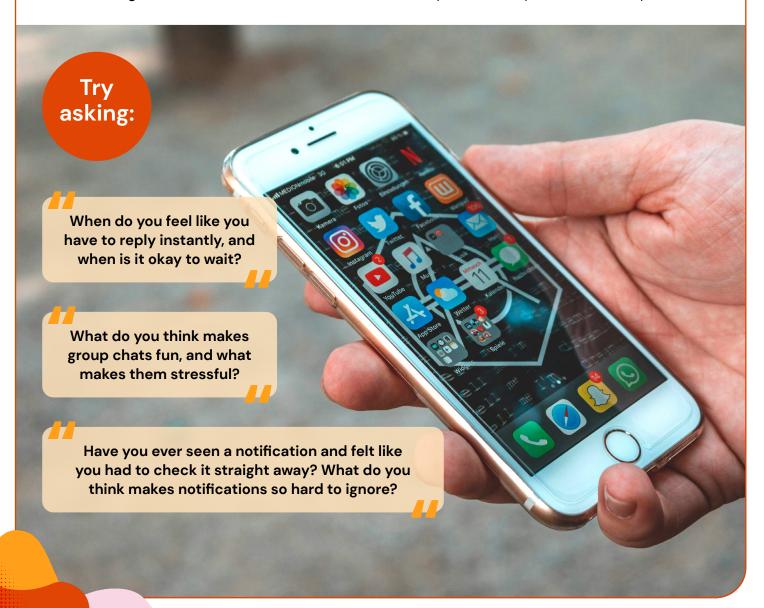
⑦ Helping your child manage FOMO and availability pressure

Why this matters: Many teens feel pressure to be online constantly, keeping up with group chats, notifications, and social media updates. FOMO (fear of missing out) and the pressure to be online 24/7 can make it harder for teens to focus, relax, or set boundaries.

How to implement:

> **Talk about the pressure to always be available:** Acknowledge that it can be hard to step away from group chats or social media without feeling like they are missing something.

> **Encourage digital boundaries:** Talk about ways to set limits, like muting notifications, taking screen-free breaks, or letting friends know when they are offline.

> **Normalise taking time offline:** Reinforce that it is okay to step away, and that true friendships do not rely on being available online 24/7.

> **Encourage a balance of online and offline social time:** Help them develop a mix of social experiences.

Try asking:

" When do you feel like you have to reply instantly, and when is it okay to wait?

" What do you think makes group chats fun, and what makes them stressful?

" Have you ever seen a notification and felt like you had to check it straight away? What do you think makes notifications so hard to ignore?
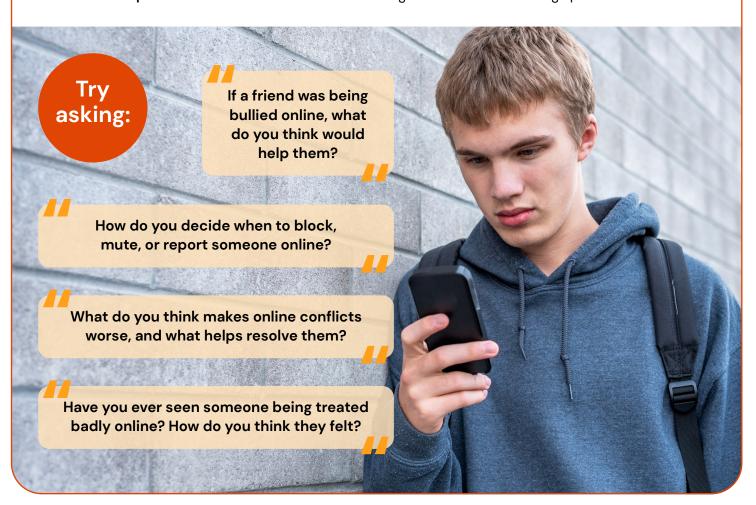
(8) Helping your child navigate cyberbullying

Why this matters: Teens cope better with cyberbullying when they have the support of at least one trusted adult. Cyberbullying is when someone repeatedly targets, threatens, or humiliates another person online. This can include hurtful messages, spreading rumours, exclusion from group chats, or posting embarrassing content. However, not all online disagreements or negative comments are cyberbullying—sometimes, they are misunderstandings or one-off conflicts. Helping teens recognise the difference and know how to respond can make a big difference.

How to implement:

> **Make it easy for them to talk to you:** Let your child know they can come to you if something online is upsetting them. Staying connected and working through solutions together can help them feel supported while navigating difficult situations.

> **Help them recognise different forms of bullying:** Discuss how repeated, intentional harm is different from a one-time disagreement.

> **Help them take action:** Support them to collect evidence (like screenshots) and report abuse to the game, app, or social media service where the bullying is happening.

> **Explore further support options:** If cyberbullying is severe and the platform does not help, the eSafety Commission can assist with removing harmful content and providing more guidance. Counselling can also offer extra support.

> **Reinforce positive online behaviour:** Talk about being kind online and standing up for others.

Try asking:

" If a friend was being bullied online, what do you think would help them? "

" How do you decide when to block, mute, or report someone online? "

" What do you think makes online conflicts worse, and what helps resolve them? "

" Have you ever seen someone being treated badly online? How do you think they felt? "

⑨ Help your teen understand what keeps them online for so long

Why this matters: YouTube and social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram are designed to keep users engaged for as long as possible. They use a range of persuasive design features to make it harder to log off, including:

> Algorithms – automated systems that track what users watch, like, or interact with, and then suggest similar content to keep them scrolling.

> Autoplay – a feature that automatically starts the next video (e.g., on YouTube), making it easy to keep watching.

> Infinite scrolling – a feature that continuously loads new content as users scroll, removing natural stopping points and encouraging continued browsing.

> Notifications – alerts that draw users back to the platform by highlighting new activity, messages, or content.

Understanding these features helps teens recognise when they are being nudged to stay online and can help them to take control of their screen time.

How to implement

> **Talk about how these features work:** Discuss how social media platforms are designed to maximise time spent online. Ask your child if they've noticed how their feed keeps showing similar content, and how autoplay, notifications, and infinite scrolling make it easy to lose track of time.

> **Encourage self-reflection:** Help them notice how social media affects their time, mood, and daily activities.

> **Explore online safeguarding features:** Talk about how tools like 'Mute,' 'Focus Mode,' and 'Night Mode' can help manage online time and reduce distractions. Each platform also has its own settings to control content and customise the online experience—exploring these together can help teens feel more in control of their digital world.

Try asking:

" I sometimes check one message and suddenly 20 minutes have passed, and I am still online. Does that happen to you? What do you do about it? "

" If you could redesign social media to make it easier to log off, what would you change? "

" What types of posts show up most often on your feed? "