SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

Secondary | November 2024

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Anti-Bullying Week

Anti-Bullying Week is Monday 11th- Friday 15th November. The theme for this year's anti-bullying week is 'Choose Respect.'

Bullying, as defined by the Anti-Bullying Alliance is; the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.

As parents, we all want to ensure our children grow up in an environment that is safe, supportive and free from bullying. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is by fostering a culture of respect at home. Teaching children the value of respect helps them develop understanding, empathy and kindness towards others. When children learn to appreciate and accept differences — whether in appearance, abilities, beliefs or cultural backgrounds- they are less likely to view these differences as reasons to exclude or mistreat others.

By instilling respect, we can help our children understand that everyone has their own unique perspective and experiences which reduces the likelihood of them engaging in harmful behaviours or making negative assumptions. Encouraging mutual respect also helps children develop empathy, allowing them to put themselves in someone else's shoes. This not only discourages bullying but also promotes positive, supportive interactions among peers.

5 WAYS PARENTS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN TO DEVELOP RESPECT FOR OTHERS

1 MODEL RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

Demonstrating respect in your interactions with others- listening attentively, being polite and showing empathy sets a powerful example.

2 ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

Encourage them to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Ask questions like 'how do you think that made them feel?'

3 SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Establish and reinforce boundaries around respectful behaviour, such as speaking politely and listening to others. Be consistent with this.

4 DISCUSS DIVERSITY AND ACCEPTANCE

Encourage curiosity and respect for people's differences, helping them to appreciate diversity rather than fear it.

5 MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Help them navigate the media by discussing messages in TV shows or on social media that may promote disrespectful behaviour or opinions.

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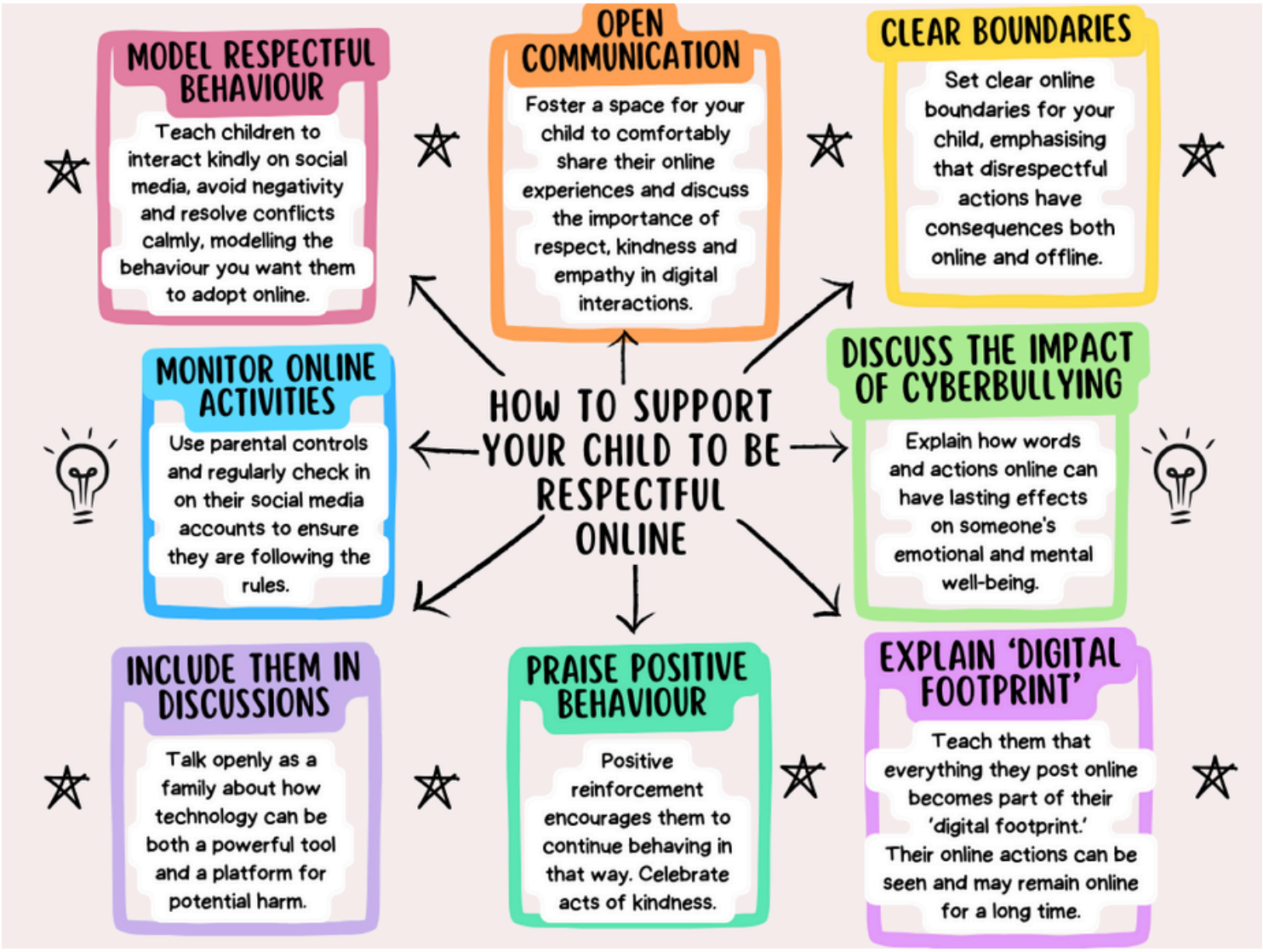
Support for children facing online bullying: Navigating the digital landscape

As children increasingly engage with the online world, it becomes clear that they encounter more negative interactions, some of which can be considered bullying.
It is crucial for children to be respectful online as the anonymity provided by the internet can magnify the impact of negative behaviour, such as cyberbullying. Hurtful actions online can harm a child's mental health, self-esteem and sense of security. Encouraging respectful online interactions helps children contribute to a more positive and supportive digital space, while also protecting them from engaging in or becoming victims of harmful behaviour. By teaching respect online, we help our children develop empathy and responsible digital habits, which are essential in today's connected world.



Navigating negative situations on WhatsApp

WhatsApp accommodates more than 1,000 participants in a group chat, and platforms that support such large groups can heighten the risk of bullying incidents among young people.

Three ways for children to avoid bullying on WhatsApp:

1. **Block and report:** Children can block users to stop receiving messages, calls and updates, and report bullies for WhatsApp to investigate.
2. **Adjust privacy settings:** Parents can help children limit who can add them to group chats and who sees their profile details, reducing unwanted interactions.
3. **Avoid engagement in negative situations:** It's important for children to avoid responding to bullies, as engaging can escalate the situation. Instead, they should save any evidence of bullying (such as screenshots) and seek support from parents, teachers or trusted adults.