

What parents in lockdown need to know about digital resilience

The government's instructions to stay at home have upended our relationship with technology. The old worries about screen time have gone out of the window, at least for the moment. Staying connected seems more important than anything else, as the range of things we're using technology for (physical fitness and class teaching – who'd have thought?) has broadened.

The risks for young people online haven't gone away – although the kinds of risk may have changed. It's too early to know yet whether there will be new hazards and, if so, what they will look like, but the advice to parents remains the same. If they encourage digital resilience in their children, they won't go far wrong.

Here's advice you can give to parents that will apply whatever they may face in the coming weeks:

The best way to help children and young people to thrive online is to ensure they are equipped to be digitally resilient.

This means:

- They understand that there are some risks online
- They know how to get help
- They can learn from experience
- They can recover

Understanding risks online

Talk to your child about what they like doing online.

- How are they structuring their days at the moment?
- What are they doing for work?
- What are they doing for fun and relaxation?
- Have they found new ways to use their tech?
- Have they worked out good ways of keeping in touch with their friends?
- Are there things they like about this new situation?
- What do they dislike?
- Do they see any risks or threats?
- Are those different to the old ones?

It's important to be open-ended in these conversations, rather than giving the impression you're checking up on them. Be genuinely interested in their online lives: why they like the games they do, for example.

Children are often very good judges of what's good or bad for them – but they may need encouraging to talk about their views, their thoughts, and their feelings.

Know what to do to seek help

Make sure your child knows that if they come up against problems online, or they end up involved in something they regret, they won't be blamed. Any worries they have, they can come to you and you will be sympathetic – and if they really can't talk to you, make sure there is an adult they can talk to.

Reassure them that we're all learning, especially in this new situation – and learning inevitably means getting some things wrong. The trick is to recognise when it happens and work out how to put things right. Adults are on a learning curve as well; we're surprising ourselves by what we can still do when stuck at home, and reassessing what's important to us. The important thing is to think about what you're finding out: do you want what's happening to carry on, and if not, what can you change?

If you need to report something that's happening online, you can do so in the following ways:

- On social media platforms such as [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Snapchat](#), there are simple mechanisms for reporting. These links take you to the reporting pages – or you can search for 'Report' or go to their 'Help' sections.
- True Vision is a police-funded site that provides information about hate crime. You can report all forms of hate crime, including online content, at www.report-it.org.uk. This includes racial, homophobic, religious or disability hate crime.
- To report online material promoting terrorism or extremism go to <https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism>.
- Content on mobile phones – unsuitable videos, still images or text – can be reported to the mobile operator. The mobile operator may pass on the query to the [British Board of Film Classification](#).
- Any inappropriate contact from an adult can be reported to the National Crime Agency at [NCA-CEOP](#)

Recover

We are all facing adversity. It's a tough time, and we're getting through it partly in the hope and belief that what we learn now will help us in the future.

If your child has a difficult or unpleasant experience online, it's important to acknowledge their feelings about it. They are allowed to be upset. It is important, too, to show them that you're prepared and able to help in the right kind of way. That may range from quite small things – talking to them sympathetically, for instance – to reporting.

It is also important to reassure them that experience equips us to deal with the next thing – that in future we will be more rounded, a bit wiser, and a little more confident.