

Cyber Wellness

It's more than saying no to devices.

Why Should We Be Concerned about Cyber Wellness?

The data may surprise you.

Did you know?

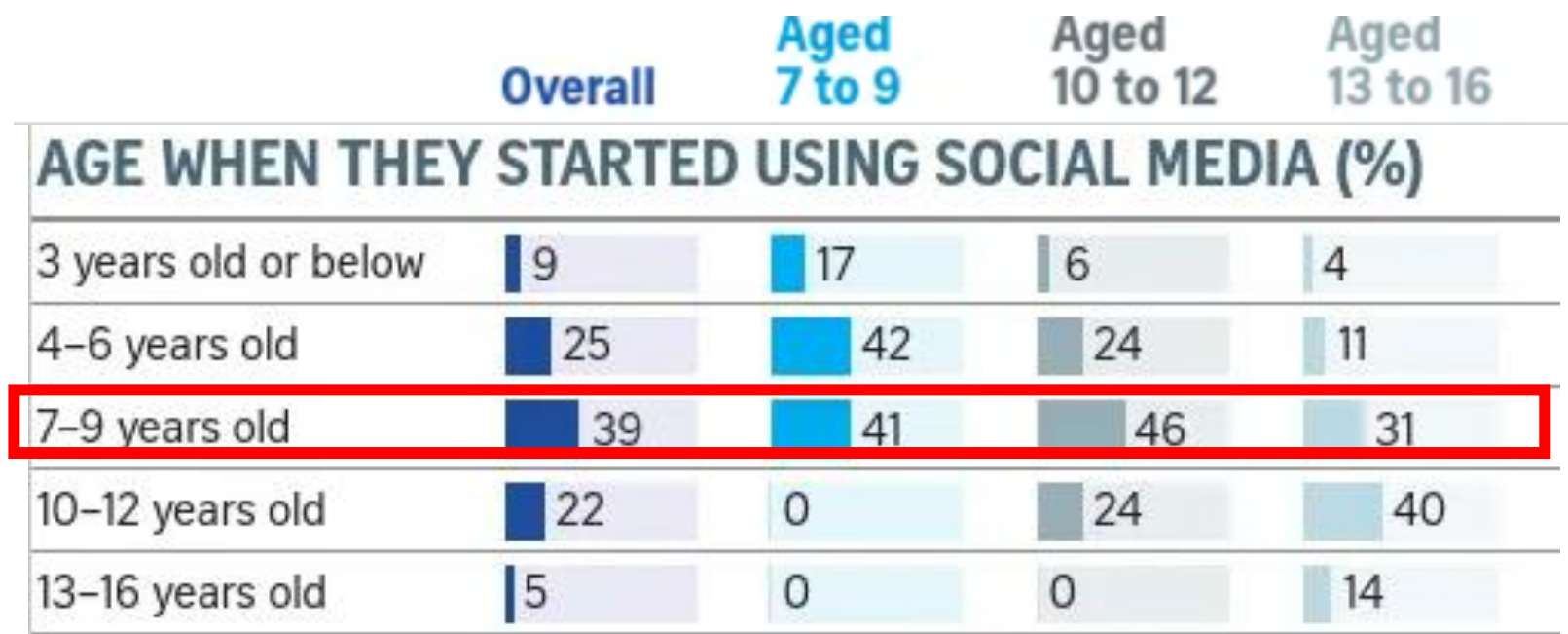
Our children are **going online from a younger age**.

67% of children aged 7 to 9, and **85%** for those aged 10 to 12 in Singapore use **smartphones** every day, and are active on **social media**.

However, research has shown that both **screen time** and **type of screen use** (educational vs recreational) can impact our **children's well-being**.

What does this mean?

We need to help our children achieve **balanced and purposeful** screen use.

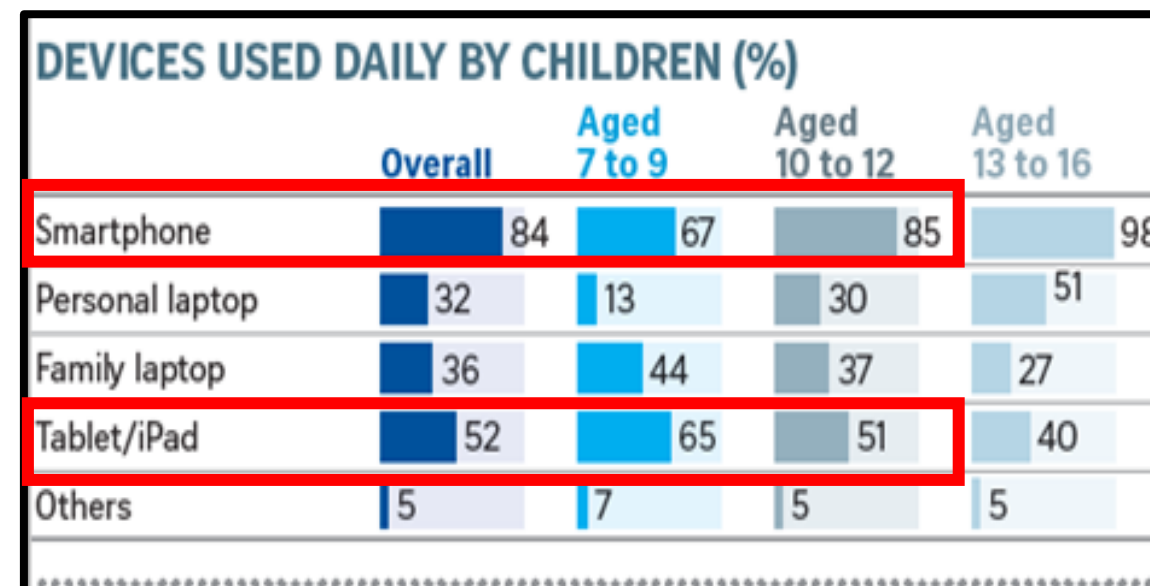


CURRENT REALITY

Children are going online from a younger age

CURRENT REALITY

Two-thirds of these children use a smartphone and/or a tablet/iPad daily.



Did you know?

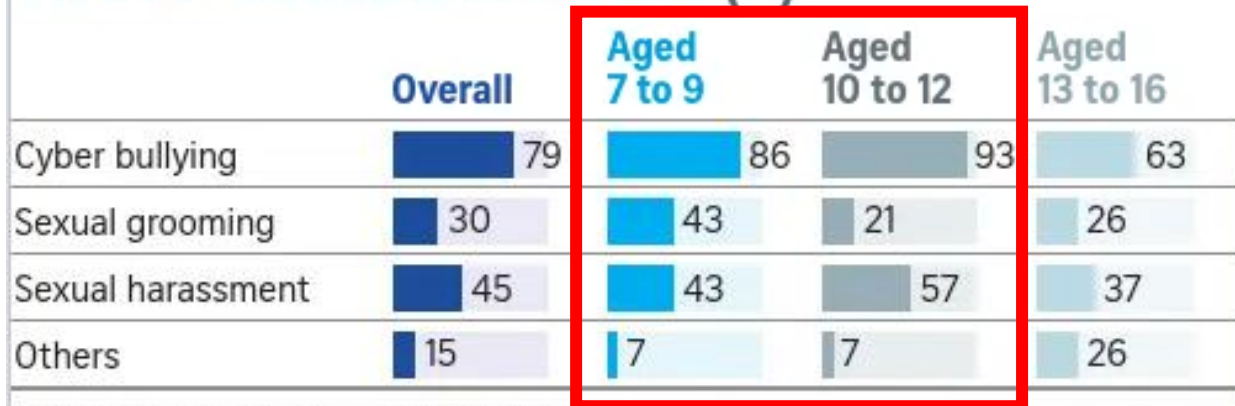
A survey of 600 parents in Singapore revealed the types and frequency of **harmful content** our children are exposed to, including cyberbullying, sexual grooming, and sexual harassment.

However, **not all parents are aware** of the **online risks**.

What does this mean?

We need to be **involved** in our children's digital lives, and put in **parental controls** to keep them safe and role-model for responsible use.

TYPES OF ONLINE HARASSMENT (%)



NOTE: This question was posed only to parents who reported that their children had faced online harassment. The poll is subject to a margin of error that is comparable with other research surveys.

Source: MILIEU INSIG
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

CURRENT REALITY

Types and frequency of harmful content our children are exposed to

Source: Milieu Insights, [reported by the Straits Times](#) (Feb 2021)

Parents might not be aware, but...

1 in 3 children has chatted with strangers online

1 in 3 children has been exposed to pornographic materials

1 in 4 children has overshared their personal information

Source: [MLC-TOUCH Parent Child Poll Findings](#) (30 Nov 2023)



Source: [MDDI Survey](#) (Feb 2024)

Did you know?

Most social media platforms and popular games have **App Store age-ratings**:

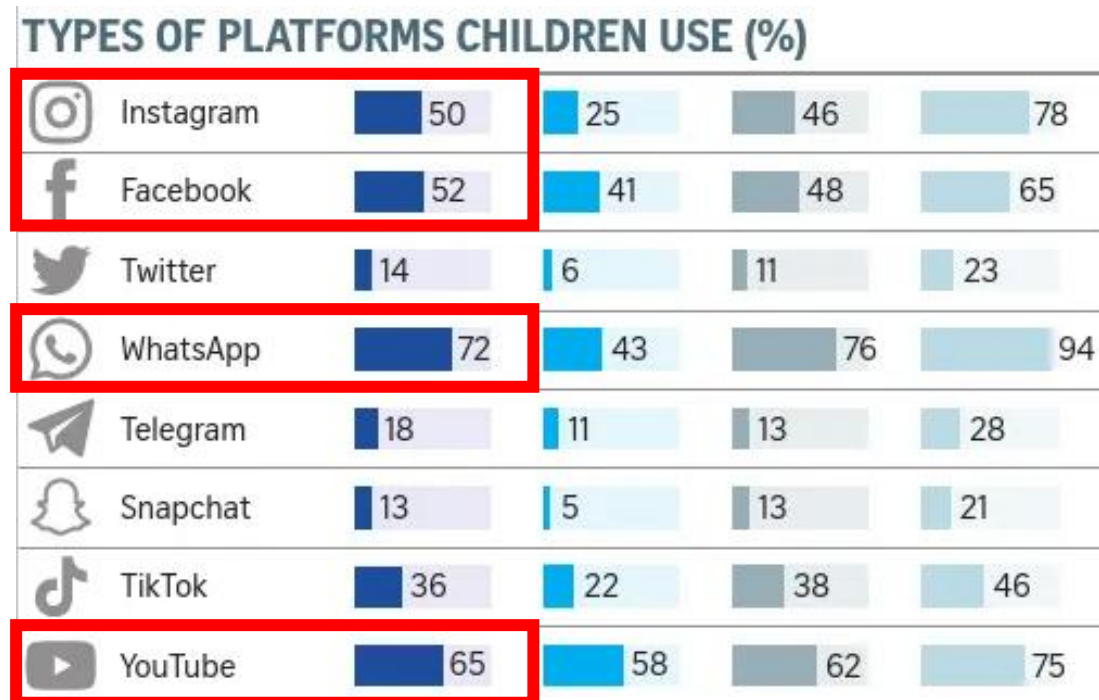
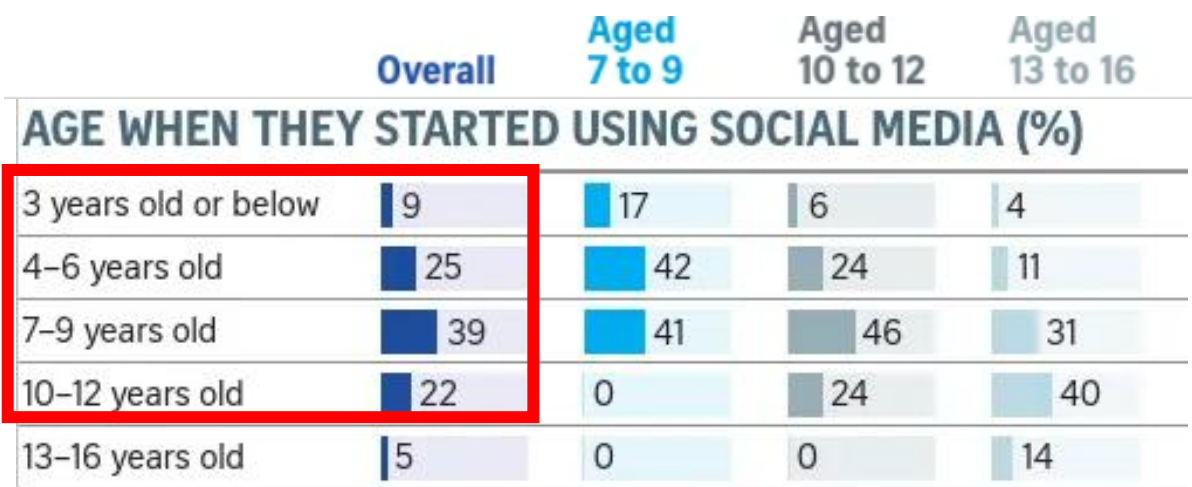
- **12+** : WhatsApp, Instagram, Roblox
- **17+** : Telegram and Discord

But the **majority of our children** have access to social media **before the recommended ages**.

Research shows that **screen use (smartphone and social media access) in young children** is associated with: insufficient good quality sleep, sedentary behaviours, obesity, and mental health and well-being .

What does this mean?

We need to ensure our children's use of devices and platforms are **age-appropriate**, and have **open conversations** with them about their digital habits.



CURRENT REALITY

About
a third
of parents



with children aged
seven to 12 said they
had Instagram accounts

Source: Milieu Insights, [reported by the Straits Times](#) (Feb 2021)

What is Cyber Wellness?

Cyber Wellness is the ability of our children and youth to navigate the cyberspace safely.

This is done through our **Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum** which aims to:

- **equip students with the knowledge and skills** to harness the power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) **for positive purposes**;
- maintain a **positive presence in cyberspace**; and
- be **safe and responsible users of ICT**.

Through the curriculum, your child learns knowledge and skills to have **balanced screen use, be safe online, and exhibit positive online behaviours**.

Resources

Scan here to find out more about MOE's Cyber Wellness curriculum:



<https://go.gov.sg/moe-cw-education>

What Will Your Child Learn in School?

Find out what your child will learn about **Cyber Wellness** during **CCE (FTGP)*** lessons and other programmes.

***Character and Citizenship Education (Form Teacher Guidance Period)**

Primary 5 and 6

During
CCE(FTGP)
lessons,
students will
be taught:

Be a positive peer influence online and manage digital footprints

- Speak up and stand for what is right regardless of peer pressure
- Seeking help from trusted adults/sources when needed
- Awareness of permanence of online data and review privacy settings

Importance of cybersecurity

- Protect oneself from phishing, spam, scams and hacking

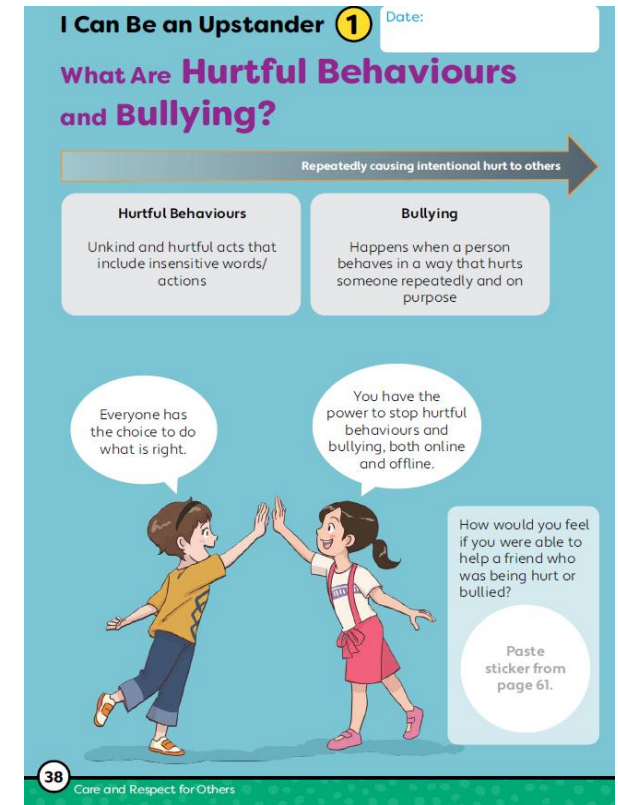
How to verify online falsehoods

- Use S.U.R.E.* to verify information online

Staying Safe from Pornography

- Understand the impact of pornography on themselves and others
- Reject pornographic content using the 'Stop-Think-Do' strategy.
- Know that keeping, selling, sharing or forwarding pornographic materials is an offence

*S.U.R.E. stands for **S**ource, **U**nderstand, **R**esearch, **E**valuate.
It is part of National Library Board's Information Literacy Programme.*



Encourage our children to share their experiences as they navigate friendships.

How Can We Partner Up?

Together, we can raise happy, kind and confident children, ready to thrive in the digital world.

3 areas we can work together on to foster School-Home Partnership

1 Respectful Communication

Our children do best when schools and parents work hand in hand to support them.

2 Role Models

3 Real Connections



Respectful Communication

Listen, understand, and foster kind words and actions between you and your child.



Have regular and genuine conversations with your child

- to better understand what they do online,
- how to stay safe,
- how to use technology in a responsible manner.

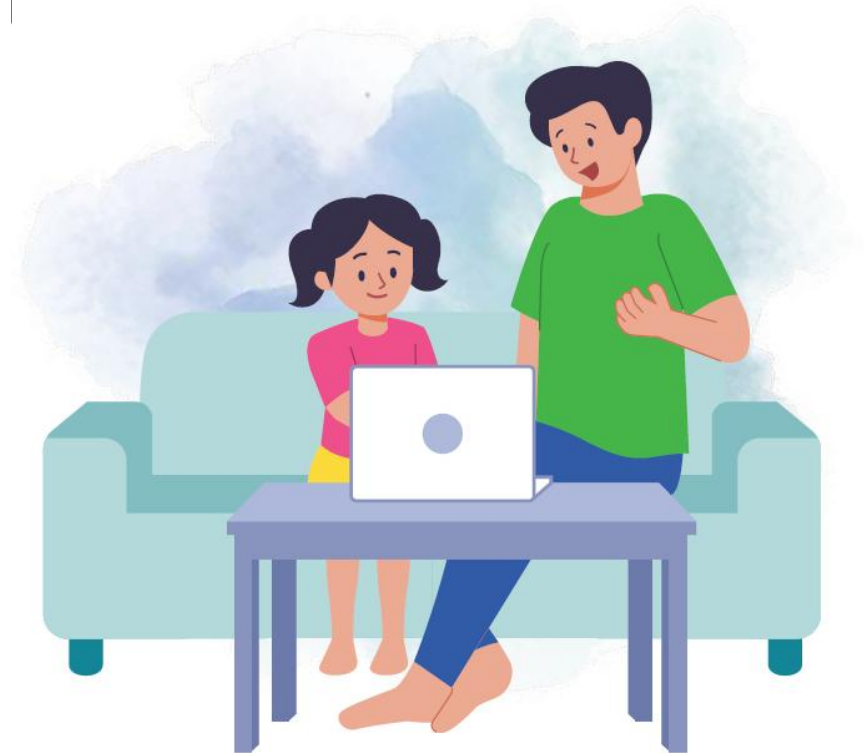


Communicate your actions and rationale.

- Let your child know **you care for them** and **want them to be safe online.**



Discuss with your child as you set parental controls to manage device use and stay safe online.



Role Models

You play a key role helping your child establish healthy digital habits and learn to use technology in a positive and meaningful way.



Role model healthy use of devices and social media, and good online behaviour for your child/ward.

- E.g. parents/guardians not using devices during mealtimes, respectful online communication



Role modelling respectful conversations.

- You are in the best position to role model these skills through daily interactions with your child.
- **Listen to understand first**, instead of jumping straight into giving advice and solutions.



Real Connections

Cultivate strong relationships and healthy habits in this digital age.



Provide a safe space for conversations

- Children may hesitate to share their true thoughts and feelings with their parents, as they fear being judged or misunderstood.
- Let your child know that it is **normal to feel or think the way they do**. Help them **feel safe** expressing themselves with you.



Provide a balanced mix of engaging online and offline activities

- **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** (less than 2 hours daily, excluding school work).





Supplementary Thematic Content

What are we most concerned about?



Unlocking their First Smartphone or Watch

How can we prepare ourselves and our children?

At what **age** should I give my child their first smartphone or watch?

Based on MOH's Guidance on Screen use in Children, parents should not give children mobile devices with unrestricted access to internet and applications. Parents can **delay the provision of smartphone and smartwatches** to their children.

Consider these questions:

Are they ready?	Can your child: • keep track of their belongings independently? • handle their own responsibilities without constant reminders? • obey rules and guidelines set in place? • differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate content?
Are you and your family ready?	Can you be a good role model for your child, and establish and enforce rules with your child's smartphone usage, including monitoring apps, screen time and internet use?

If you answer 'no' to any of these questions, it is wise to wait until your child is older – **ideally when your child is in secondary school**. Children who are already facing challenges (such as low self-esteem, poor self-control, bullying, or high stress) are more vulnerable to problematic screen use.

How do I **prepare** my child for their first smartphone or watch?

If you determine that you and your child are ready...

Tips	Conversation starters
Reflect on safe and responsible smartphone use	“How will you show me you will use your smartphone responsibly, respectfully, and safely?”
Co-create a family screen use plan	“Let’s come up with a set of family rules on how we should use our smartphones.” “Let’s think about what should happen if anyone breaks any of the rules.”
Include the setting of Parental Controls in your conversations	“The online space can be dangerous, and we would like to keep you safe. These parental controls that we put in will help to protect you. Let’s set a date in 6 months’ time to see if we should adjust the controls.”

If you think you and your child might not be ready yet,

here are some alternatives:

- Basic phones/Smartwatches offering calling and texting functions without internet access or apps (please check school’s policies on usage in schools)
- Set a date/age to review your child’s readiness for a smartphone/watch.



How do I **monitor** my child's online activities and keep them safe?

When you decide that your child is ready to own a phone, it's important to **provide structure and support** and not simply hand over the device.

Experts recommend that parents:

- build on having a warm relationship with their child,
- set and communicate limits regarding phone use,
- pair rules with active supervision, and
- have regular conversations about your child's phone use.

In addition to these strategies, **take time to set up parental controls** on your child's device. Most phones allow you to:

Limit usage times	Control what time of the day and for how long the phone can be used.
Restrict content	Block access to content that is not age appropriate.
Manage activities	Allow only certain games or apps to be used, decide who can be added as friends, and determine whether private messaging is allowed.
Safeguard against unwanted spending	Restrict app store and in-app purchases.

It's important that you **actively monitor and discuss these controls** — especially at the beginning.



Playing Online Games

Navigating the world of digital entertainment, together.



What do I need to know about online games?

How can my child access online games?

- Online games are everywhere, and complex games can be played on-the-go via smartphones.

If my child enjoys online gaming, why not?

- While gaming is fun and can bring about positive outcomes (e.g., feeling good about their abilities and effort), **excessive gaming can lead to negative impacts**, such as excessive in-app purchases, attracting unwanted attention, increasing anxiety and the risk of cyber bullying.

Does the game have age restrictions?

- To check if a game is age-appropriate, video game ratings can be found on the IMDA website.
- Age ratings on games can be found on Google and Apple app stores. For example, Roblox, a popular mobile game, is age-rated 12+.

What can I do if I am concerned about the gaming habits of my child?

Discuss your concerns with your child through open conversations

- Discuss your concerns with your child and develop a **realistic timetable** to balance their gaming with other screen-free activities.
- **Review the plan regularly** with your child.

Tips	Conversation Starters
Ask about a game that your child seems to be playing frequently.	“What is this game about?” “Why do you find this game fun? Can you share more with me?”
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.	“What are some suggestions on rules of gaming that you may have?” “Let’s discuss what would happen if anyone breaks the rules.”
Prompt your child to think about the risks of gaming	“Do you chat with strangers you’ve just met while playing online games? What are some possible dangers that can come?” “Can you help me understand why you spent \$300 on your game?”



What can I do if I am concerned about the gaming habits of my child?

Seek help from school and community

- If there is **no improvement** and their gaming behaviour **continues to be a cause of concern**, you may want to seek help from the school or other community partners such as **Help123 at 1800 6123 123**.

Seek professional help

- If there is **marked deterioration** and **significant impairment to the child's life**, consider seeking professional help.
- The professionals can assess the severity of the problem and recommend appropriate interventions.
 - You can approach the School Counsellor for support in this area.
 - You may call **National Addiction Management Service All Addictions helpline** at 6-RECOVER (**67326837**).



Accessing their First Social Media Account

Our children live in a digitally-connected world.
When should we say “yes” to social media?

At what age should I allow my child to have their own social media account?

Laws and Regulations

- Most social media platforms (including WhatsApp) **require users to be aged 12 years and above** (*except Telegram and Discord, which requires users to be 17+*).

Mental Health Concerns

- 27% of youth reported spending more than three hours on social media platforms daily, and were 1.5 times more likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety. (*Institute of Mental Health, 2024*)

Maturity of the child

- **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.
- Maturity can be assessed by observing your child's ability to
 - make responsible decisions to keep themselves safe online.
 - manage the pressures and feelings that come with social media use.
- **Have open conversations** with them on the risks of social media, and why they cannot access social media as they are not of age.

What are some considerations when I allow my child to have their own social media account?

After following age guidelines and having conversations with your child, **if both of you feel that your child is ready for a social media account...**

Co-create and establish clear ground rules on keeping themselves safe when using it

- Discuss with them their responsibilities and your expectations of their social media use.

Responsibilities and Expectations	Conversation Starters
Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours	“How do we keep ourselves safe on social media?”
	“What are some dangers of oversharing personal information?”
Clear rules on healthy social media use	“What does healthy social media use look like?”
Consequences for misuse of social media	“What are some ground rules we can establish as a family?”



Cyberbullying

Building Resilience and Character
while creating safe spaces for our children

Did you know?

A 2025 Digital Parenting Survey (MDDI) found that **more than 50%** of parents are concerned about cyberbullying.

MOE supports parents with resources related to children's mental well-being, cyber wellness, and strengthening parent-child relationships.

Through **CCE lessons**, students understand that bullying and cyberbullying is wrong, and acquire skills to:

- cultivate empathy and be kind
- manage differences and resolve disagreements respectfully
- be assertive, manage negative influences and seek help
- stand up against bullying and support peers affected as upstanders and peer supporters,

Source: [Channel News Asia](#) (12 Sep 2025)



What are hurtful behaviours and bullying?

In Singapore, local studies show that verbal/social bullying forms the bulk of the types of bullying experienced in schools and they often start as 'harmless teasing' or leaving someone out but escalate into bullying.



Hence, **we need to take a serious view of all forms of hurtful behaviours and bullying**, starting from once-off insensitive remarks before they become normalised or escalated.

Hurtful behaviours

Unkind and hurtful acts that include insensitive words/actions, even physical violence.

Bullying

Happens when a person behaves in a way that hurts someone **repeatedly** and **on purpose**

Forms of hurtful behaviours/ bullying

Physical

Hitting someone or damaging someone's belongings, tends to occur alongside other forms of hurtful behaviours

It can extend from offline to online platforms, amplifying its visibility

Cyber

Hurtful behaviours/ bullying that occurs when online technology (e.g. mobile phones, computers or social media) is used as a means to hurt or upset someone **on purpose** and **repeatedly** (through sharing and/or resurfacing a post)

Social

Leaving someone out of a group or things on purpose

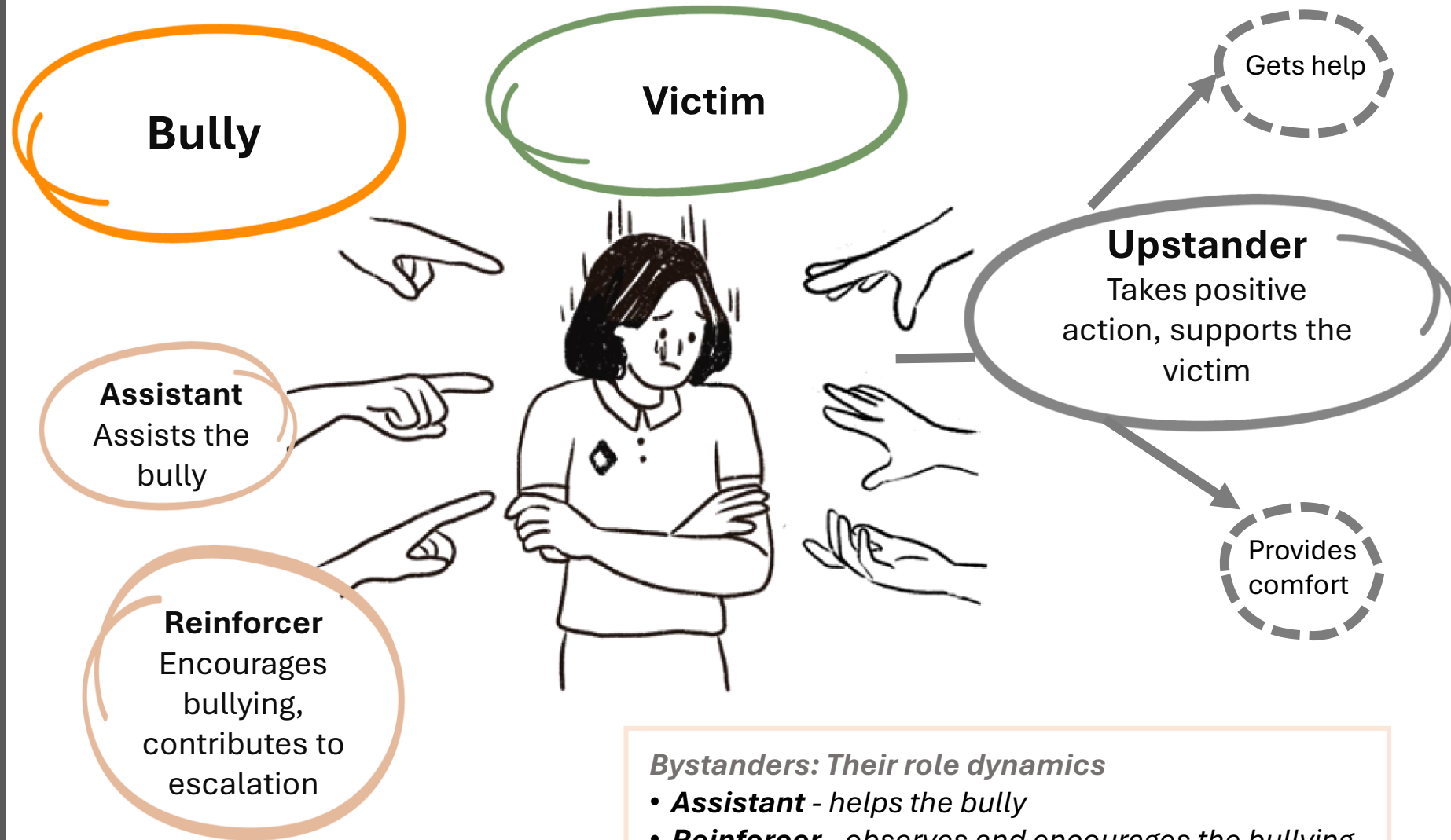
Multiple forms of bullying could be experienced by the same student at the same time or sequentially.

Verbal

Name-calling, spreading rumours or making threats

Some common forms of cyber bullying include flaming, harassment, cyber stalking, denigration, impersonation, exclusion, trickery and doxxing.

Do you know the different roles* in bullying?



Bystanders: Their role dynamics

- **Assistant** - helps the bully
- **Reinforcer** - observes and encourages the bullying
- **Upstander** - stands up against the hurtful behaviour, comforts the victim or gets help
- **Outsider** - avoids acting or taking sides

*The terms used here are meant to provide a simplistic description and are not meant to label students.

How can I guide my child to be kind and respectful online?

Ask your child if what they are about to post or share online is... **Truthful, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind (T.H.I.N.K.)?**



IS IT TRUE?

Is this a fact or just an opinion or feeling?



IS IT HELPFUL?

Does it help you, them, or the situation?



IS IT INSPIRING?

Would it encourage, motivate, and make someone feel better?



IS IT NECESSARY?

Does it really have to be said, or you just want to or feel like saying it?

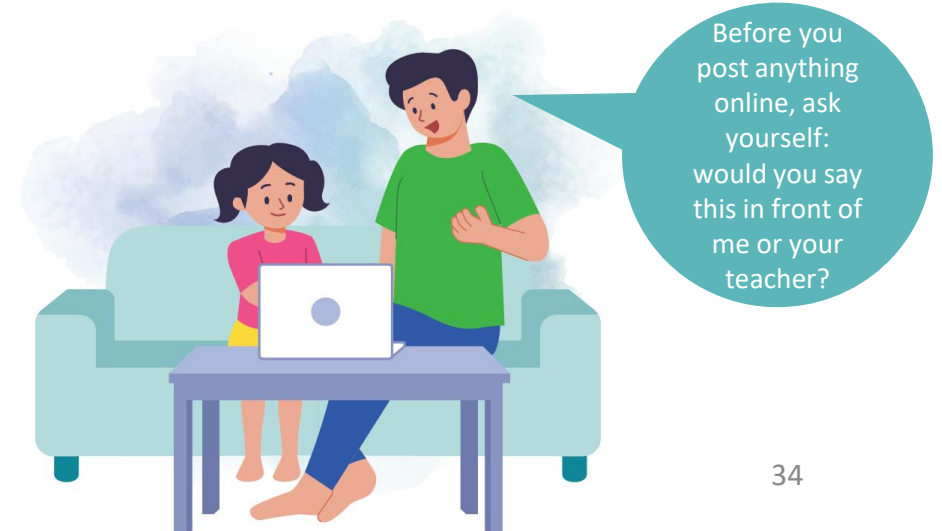


IS IT KIND?

Are you saying this with the intention to hurt someone's feelings?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “No”, they should not post or share 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 or sharing anything online, your child learns to be kind and avoids hurting others with their online behaviour.



What are some signs of bullying?

Bully/Perpetrator

- Tends to be impulsive and aggressive
- Tends to have poor relationships or lack empathy with others
- May blame victims for their behaviour by saying things like, 'if he/she were XX, I would not have XX'
- May appear anxious while using digital devices
- Tends to hide or turn off the monitor/devices when someone approaches

Victim/Targeted

- Becomes less sociable than usual around family and friends
- May struggle with studies or lose interest in school
- Becomes upset or anxious, especially when receiving messages or using devices
- Spends less time on the activities they used to enjoy
- May experience poor health as struggling with the bully saps the energy and ability to focus

Bystander

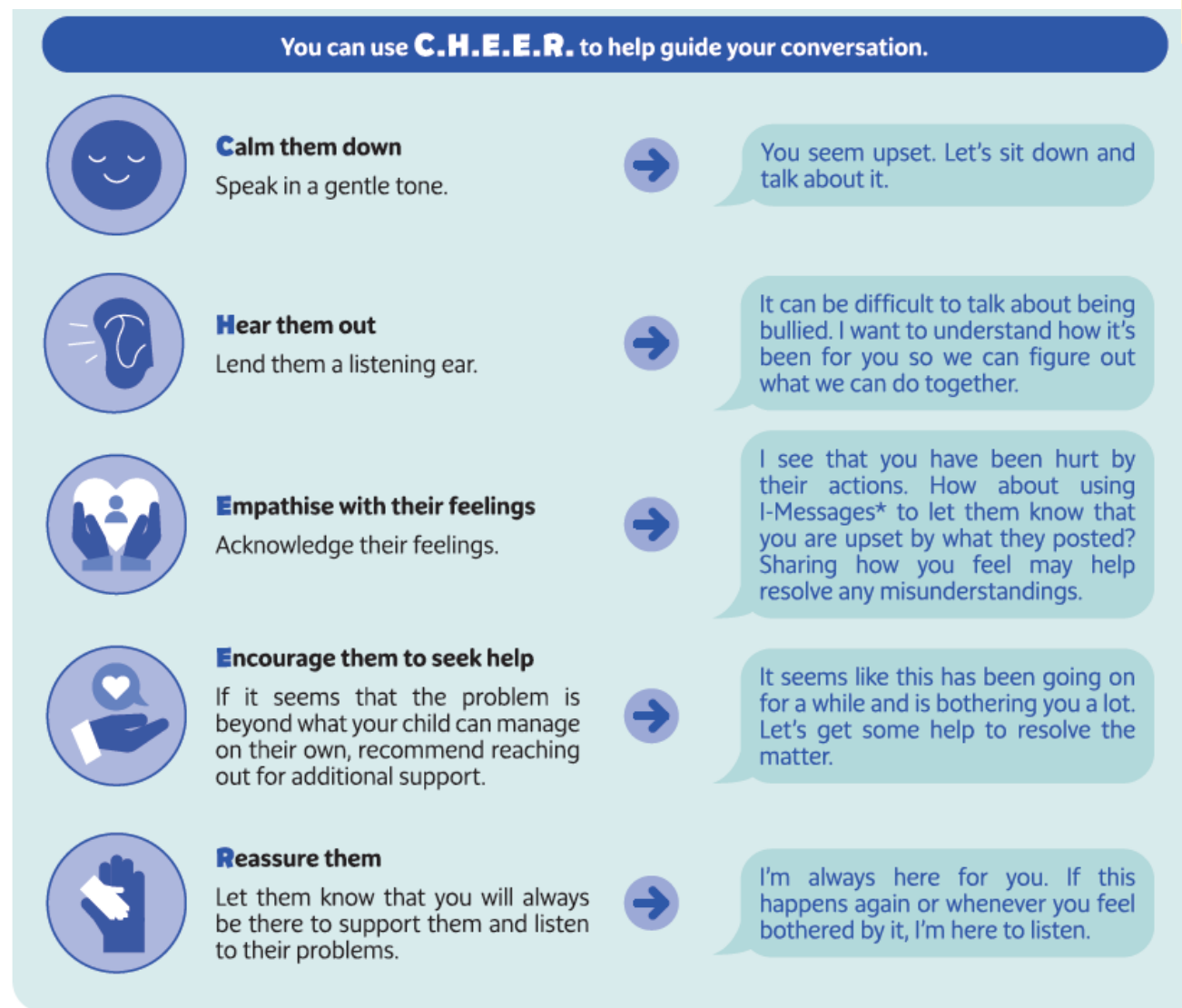
- May fear being targeted by the bully or straining relationships
- Tends to feel anxious and powerless about being unable to stop bullying
- May feel unsafe in class/school
- May experience guilt of not defending the victim

How can I help if my child is a victim?

Have a conversation using **C.H.E.E.R.** as a guide to understand what they are experiencing.



Remain calm to assess the situation and provide emotional support to your child.



**I-messages are used to communicate one's feelings and needs to others clearly and respectfully. For example, "I felt upset when you posted that photo of me making a funny face that made me look silly. I would need you to remove that photo, please."*

How can I help if
my child is a
victim?



How can I help if my child is the bully?

If you suspect that your child is cyberbullying others, remain calm. You can:

- Ask questions to understand what happened.
- Let them know that bullying is unacceptable. Encourage them to apologise sincerely and make amends to repair relationships.
- Monitor their online activities e.g. their social media posts
- Reach out for extra support from school.



Parents, your child's **behaviour change takes time** and requires consistent effort. You can build their character by **setting clear expectations** about treating others respectfully and **role-modelling** positive behaviours in your interactions.



How can I help to guide my child to be an upstander?

If your child is involved in a cyberbullying incident as a bystander, **help them feel safe and supported**.

Remind your child **not to like, share, record or repost** the online message or media.

Guide your child to take on **upstanding behaviours** by:

- asking your child whether they want you to listen, to help with more ideas about what to do / how to support the victim or to help them to report the incident.
- letting your child know that it is okay if they don't feel safe or confident to stand up to bullying.



If you come to know that the hurtful behaviour continues, please approach the school and continue to support your child.





Exposure to Pornography

Keeping our children safe from inappropriate online content

Did you know?

According to survey findings released by the Ministry of Digital Development and Information (MDDI) in September 2025, about 81% of 1,986 parents surveyed said they were worried about their children being exposed to inappropriate content online, which includes pornography.

Online harms or risks parents are most concerned about



SHECARES, a support center run by SHE in collaboration with the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, has handled over 440 cases of online harms since its launch in 2023, including deepfake and AI-generated pornography.

Source: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/37-cent-parents-feel-confident-child-digital-habits-mddi-survey-5343691>
MDDI Digital Parenting Survey 2025

How can pornography impact children and youths?

Viewing pornography can distort a young person's views on sexuality.

Developing an unhealthy perception of relationships

A young person may be misled into thinking that pornographic material is real, which **affects one's ability to form healthy and respectful relationships.**

Developing addictive behaviours, including viewing pornography

A young person's brain is still developing and may lack self-control. Prolonged viewing of pornography may **impact daily habits and routines for healthy well-being.**

Misleads perceptions and attitudes towards men and women

The inaccurate portrayals of gender roles may result in unhealthy mindsets which **reinforce gender stereotypes.**

Developing insecurities about one's body image

Pornographic content **depicts unrealistic sexual encounters and body shapes.**

Repeated exposure to highly sexualised content (e.g. online games, anime, pornography) can reduce a young person's sensitivity to such material, and may normalise inappropriate behaviours.

What is my child learning in school?

During CCE(FTGP) lessons, students will be taught:

Did You Know? 1 Date: _____

Keeping Myself Safe from Harmful Content

Stop Sense the dangers.	Think about the consequences.	Do Act responsibly.
How do I know that this image or content is not safe for me?	What are my choices and how will they affect me?	What responsible actions can I take?
- Does the image or content make me feel uncomfortable, weird, scared, confused or guilty? - Can I understand what the content is about? - Is it healthy/unhealthy, safe/unsafe, right/wrong if I view the image or content?	- How will it affect the way I view myself and others? - Is it something that is against the school rules/the law? - How will my parent/teacher respond if they see me looking at this image or content? - Is it what I believe/think is important?	- Stop looking or viewing the image or content. E.g. Close the website immediately. Click 'Control-Alt-Delete' if the site does not allow you to exit. - Tell a trusted adult such as _____ - Share with him/her any information that led you to this image/content.



Staying Safe from Pornography

- Understand the impact of pornography on themselves and others
- Reject pornographic content using the '**Stop-Think-Do**' strategy
- Know that keeping, selling, sharing or forwarding pornographic materials is an offence



Reinforce the 'Stop-Think-Do' strategy with your child, and have open conversations about the harmful effects of pornography.

Family Time **Family Chat Time**

I can

- share with my family members how I can act responsibly when I stumble upon unhealthy/harmful online content.
- invite my family members to share how they can support me.

We did it together!

Parent's / Guardian's signature

How can I respond if my child is exposed to pornography?

1. Encourage healthy and responsible use of digital devices

- Place devices in open areas where screens are visible to others.
- Enable parental controls and content filters on internet browsers to minimise exposure to inappropriate content.

2. Stay calm when talking to your child, do not shame or blame

- This helps your child feel secure and encourages open sharing.

3. Listen with sensitivity and address the cause of curiosity together with age-appropriate information

- Curiosity is normal and developmentally sound.
- Share your family's values, emphasise healthy respect for self and others.

4. Share with your child the harms of pornography and how to stay safe online

- Explain how pornography can result in unhealthy views on sexuality and relationships and increase the likelihood of risky behaviours.
- Talk about the importance of never sharing private photos with others, not even friends; and explain how images can be altered and used as deepfakes to cause harm.

#1 Resources on tips and strategies on device use to help your child stay safe online are available at the end of the presentation.

How do I approach the topic of pornography with my child?

Suggestions for Conversation Starters

“Have you ever seen anything online that looks pornographic?”

If your child may not know what pornographic means, you could use alternative terms such as “indecent” or just “naked people on screen”.

“Has anyone at school ever mentioned seeing something like this?”

It can be easier for your child to talk about someone else rather than about themselves.

If your child says ‘yes’, you can follow up with:

“Where did you see it? Did someone show it to you?”

- Your child might have encountered these images through online games, or anime that they have watched.
- Reassure your child that he or she is not in trouble so that your child is willing to continue the conversation.

“How did you feel when you saw it?”

- Your child might feel upset or confused, so comfort them. But they might also be curious, so be prepared to answer some questions if they come up.
- Explain to him or her what he or she has seen, and why you think the images are inappropriate.

“What do you think you should do if someone tried to show you something like this again?”

- Let your child share responses and guide him or her to understand that it is harmful to look for such content.
- Remind your child that you are always there to listen and answer his or her questions.

Remind your child never to share private or sexually explicit photos of themselves. Assure them that they can reject and say “no” to such requests, and to inform you so that you may support and guide your child.

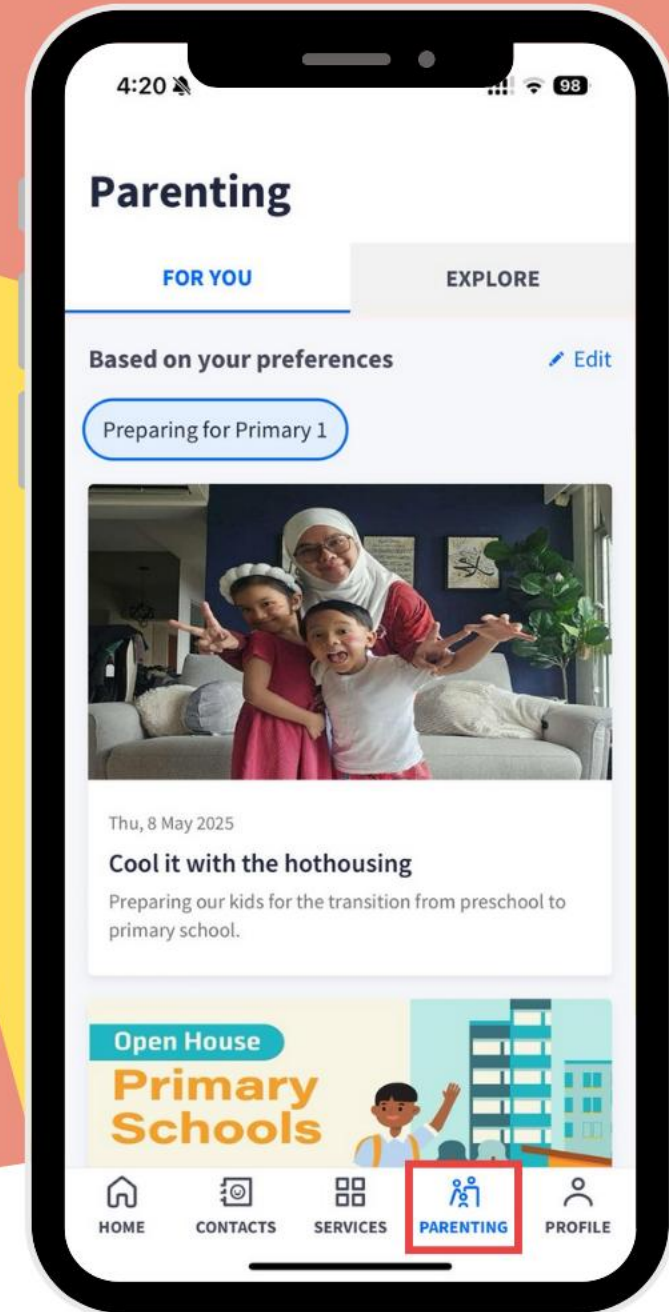
Be aware that with the emergence of AI technology, photo images may be easily used to generate deepfake sexual abuse material, including deepfake pornography.



Parenting Resources on Parents Gateway (PG)



Discover rich and customisable parenting resources on topics such as preparing for Primary 1, forging parent-child relationships and education pathways.





Begin your parenting journey with us

@parentingwith.moesg

Follow us on Instagram for bite-sized and actionable parenting tips to tackle the everyday demands of parenting.

