

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

Primary | April 2025



## Keeping your child safe on Snapchat: A parent's guide

Many children become more engaged with social media at a young age and Snapchat is one of the most popular apps among them. It is important to note that the minimum age requirement for using Snapchat is 13 years old.

While Snapchat can be a fun way for children to stay connected with friends, it also comes with risks.

### What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a social media app that allows users to send photos, videos and messages that disappear after being viewed. It also includes features like Stories, Snap Maps, and AI chatbots.

### Risks of Snapchat

While Snapchat can be enjoyable, there are risks parents should be aware of:

- **Disappearing messages:** disappearing Snaps encourage children to participate in more risky behaviour. They might send things that they wouldn't usually as they know it will disappear.
- **Stranger danger:** strangers can contact your child if their privacy settings are not secure.
- **Snap Maps:** this feature shows a user's location in real-time, which can put children at risk if not managed properly.
- **Inappropriate content:** children may come across content that is not age appropriate.
- **Pressure to maintain "Streaks":** Streaks (sending Snaps daily) can create unnecessary pressure and anxiety for children.

### Safety features parents should know

Snapchat has built-in safety features that can help protect your child. Here are some important ones:

- **Privacy settings:** go to Settings > Privacy Controls to ensure only friends can contact your child and view their content.
- **Ghost Mode on Snap Maps:** this hides your child's location from others. Enable this by going to Snap Maps and selecting 'Ghost Mode'.
- **Report and block:** teach your child how to block or report inappropriate content or users.
- **Family Centre:** Snapchat's parental control tool allows you to see who your child is communicating with while respecting their privacy.

In this issue:

A parent's guide to Snapchat  
Healthy friendships



**HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN WHO USE SNAPCHAT**

### TALK ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY

Have open conversations about online safety and responsible social media use.



### SET BOUNDARIES

Agree on screen time limits and appropriate usage times.

### ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Let your child know they can come to you if something makes them uncomfortable online.



### MODEL GOOD DIGITAL HABITS

Show your child how to use technology responsibly by setting a good example.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

## Helping your child navigate healthy friendships

As children grow, friendships become a central part of their lives. While most friendships are positive and supportive, some can become unhealthy and even coercive. Coercive controlling friendships can be difficult to spot, but they can have a significant impact on a child's well-being, confidence, and self-esteem.

## What is a coercive controlling friendship?

A coercive controlling friendship is one where one child exerts power over another in a way that is manipulative, pressuring, or emotionally harmful. Unlike typical fallouts or disagreements, these friendships involve ongoing patterns of control and intimidation.

### Some common features may include:

- One friend making all the decisions and expecting the other to comply
- Threats of exclusion or withdrawal of friendship unless demands are met
- Emotional manipulation, such as making a child feel guilty for spending time with others
- Pressure to do things that make them uncomfortable
- Name-calling, teasing, or undermining self-confidence
- Making the child feel responsible for the other's emotions or actions.

## Signs your child may be in a coercive controlling friendship

If your child is experiencing a controlling friendship, they may show some of the following signs:

- Increased anxiety or stress about seeing a particular friend.
- Changes in mood or self-esteem, such as becoming withdrawn or overly worried about pleasing one person.
- Loss of other friendships or reluctance to spend time with different friends.
- Secretive behaviour or reluctance to talk about their friendship.
- Fear of upsetting their friend, even when the demands are unreasonable.
- A sense of obligation to always agree with their friend's choices.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS IN A COERCIVE CONTROLLING FRIENDSHIP, HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP:

### 1 Encourage open conversations

Create a safe space for your child to talk about their friendships. Ask open-ended questions like, "How do you feel when you're with this friend?" or "Do you feel comfortable saying no?"

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### 2 Help your child recognise unhealthy behaviour

Teach them to identify red flags in friendships and reinforce that healthy friendships should be equal, respectful and supportive.

### 3 Boost their confidence

Encourage activities that foster self-esteem and friendships with different groups of children.

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### 4 Teach assertiveness skills

Role-play situations where they practice saying "no" or setting boundaries in a respectful way.

### 5 Encourage a wider social circle

Help your child form friendships with different peers to reduce reliance on one person.

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### 6 Speak to school staff if needed

If the situation is affecting your child's well-being at school, reach out to their teacher for support and guidance.

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Encourage your child to reflect on their friendships and ask themselves:

“Do I feel happy and safe with this friend?”

“Can I be myself around them?”

“Do we respect each other's choices?”

Friendships play a vital role in childhood development and helping children recognise and navigate healthy relationships is essential. By staying engaged and supporting your child, you can empower them to build strong, positive friendships that enrich their lives.