



stem4
supporting teenage mental health

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY™

19th September

How to #ControlYourScroll

A Guide for Young People

Written by Dr Nihara Krause MBE



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supporting teenage mental health
Registered Charity No. 1144506
stem4.org.uk

Dear YMHD supporter,

stem4, the charity I founded thirteen years ago, is once again running Youth Mental Health Day (YMHD 2024) on the 19th September, with the theme being #ControlYourScroll. We are delighted to invite you to get involved in helping us promote positive mental health in young people on the day, by taking part in a #ControlYourScroll challenge and through fundraising for our charity.

As the UK's leading digital mental health charity for children and young people, we have been interested in learning from young people how they feel their digital life is impacting their mental health. At our stem4 school conferences this year, 84%-89% of the hundreds of students attending voted that their mood was negatively affected by the time they spent online. They also revealed that they worried about being distracted and losing time by scrolling through their phones and that they sometimes feel anxious or their self-esteem is affected after. They shared that they would like to learn more about what they can do to enjoy their online experiences better and to control their scrolling behaviours. The theme for YMHD2024 was born out of these discussions and many other similar conversations with young people.

This brief guide for the day helps provide simple digital hacks and mental health strategies needed to boost your confidence in how to have a positive and safe online experience, some challenge ideas, and ways to fundraise.

Set yourself a #ControlYourScroll challenge this year based on the themes in the booklet and send us ideas and images of how you met your challenge. You can (after your challenge) tag us at @stem4org, and use this year's hashtags #ControlYourScroll and #stem4YMHD, to connect with us and with other young people on the 19th September.

As a charity dedicated to supporting young people's mental health, I would like to thank you for your valued participation.

Happy #stem4YMHD2024!

Dr. Nihara Krause
Founder and CEO, stem4



stem4.org.uk/YMHD

#ControlYourScroll

#stem4YMHD

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How to #ControlYourScroll is here to provide useful tips to help you live a positive and healthy life on- and offline. This guide looks at a range of struggles that young people face online, and provides useful ways to help manage difficulties, overcome challenges, and #ControlYourScroll.

What's inside?

<u>Introduction:</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Chapter One: #ControlYourContent</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Chapter Two: #ControlYourConnections</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Chapter Three: #ControlYourTime</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Chapter Four: #ControlYourFollow</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>About stem4</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>Get involved in Youth Mental Health Day</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>stem4 Mental Health Apps</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>Signposts</u>	<u>36</u>

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#ControlYourScroll

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Introduction

To have a better time online (and feel more confident) everyone needs some basic digital skills, and to take charge of online engagement. Making time to take notice of your emotions to online interactions is important. It's also about trying new things—from sharing content to creating your own, and knowing that although mistakes may happen, you can bounce back.

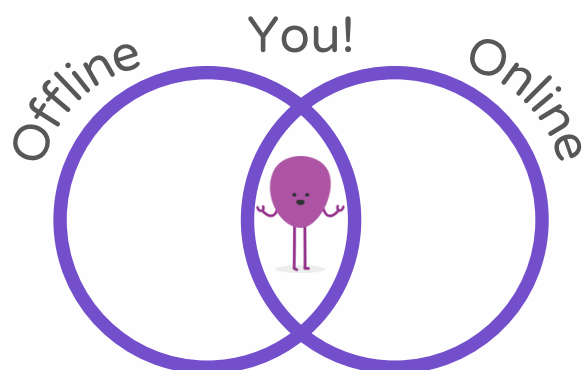
Basic Digital Skills

Being online is a bit like learning to drive. There are some basic skills that help to get the best of your online experience, together with learning how to be safe to yourself and others and when to have a break.

Some basic skills include:

- Understanding how to **use devices effectively**.
- Knowing how to **protect information** and to **think critically** about the information you access.
- To take time to **reflect** on how your interactions might be affecting you emotionally.
- To create content that's **accurate** and **kind**.
- To **keep up on new learning** about emerging technologies and challenges.
- To **behave online in the same way you would behave offline**, specifically with regards to being respectful and keeping within the law.

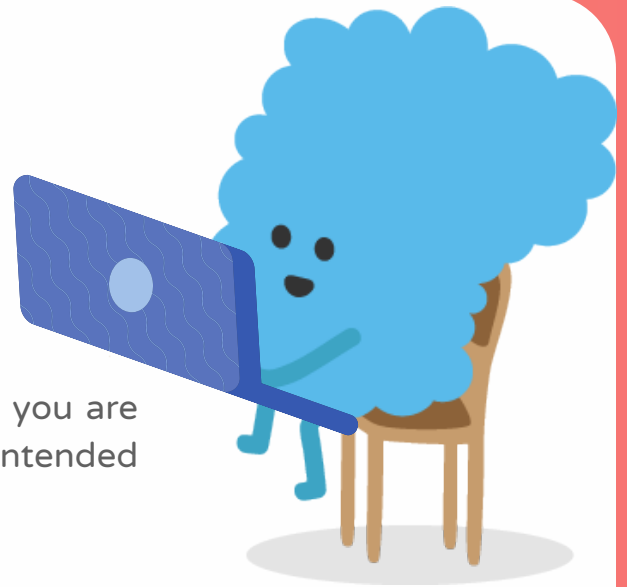
Remember: You are the person who connects your online life to your offline life.



Chapter One

#ControlYourContent

Here are some tips of how to ensure that what you are searching and posting will not have an unintended negative impact on your mental health.



What are some of the main reasons you go online?

Asked by stem4

I go online to search for information.

Answered by a young person

I use social media to find out about things, like where I should go to when on holiday, or about my mental health.

Answered by a young person

Tips for how to #ControlYourSearch



Tip 1: Use trusted websites and safe search settings.



Tip 2: Sensational headlines can act as 'clickbait' - which means they grab your attention but are more likely to have inaccurate information.



Tip 3: Be careful with personal information.



Tip 4: Question and fact check* the content you access online.

*list of fact checkers in the appendix

How to protect yourself when searching for content on sensitive topics (such as mental health)

Tip 1: About You

Why are you searching? Be clear of your reasons. If you want to confirm something, avoid 'biased searching.' This means only looking for information to confirm your belief rather than a more balanced search on both sides of the argument.

Tip 2: About Your Triggers

Learn to identify the early indicators of mental distress in yourself—this might include finding it hard to switch off from thinking about negative things, feeling on edge, difficulties sleeping and eating, feeling on a 'short fuse', being unusually irritable and angry, finding it difficult to go out, or feeling panicked. If you are feeling these in high levels, STOP your search, calm yourself and speak to a trusted person instead.



Tip 3: About the Search

Use a secure search engine (e.g. DuckDuckGo). These search engines do not track your searches or store your information. Be careful with key words since they can generate information to be pushed at you. Check the sources, are they to be trusted?

Talk to a trusted adult and get professional advice and help. Remember, everyone is unique, so the general pieces of information you access aren't always going to be right for you.



If you have seen something online that has made you feel distressed, try the Clear Fear app to manage your anxiety.

<https://clearfear.stem4.org.uk/>

Dealing with “out of your control” online experiences

Algorithms shape the content you see, without your permission and without you having any control. This can have a negative impact on your mental health and so it is helpful to know how to take control of the algorithm.



Controlling what you SEARCH and POST is not fail proof. You will make mistakes and encounter doubts and challenges on the way.

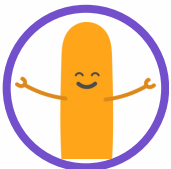


Algorithms are operational processes that determine how content is ranked, selected, and presented to users. They are created to collect personal data, use machine learning principles to analyse this data and make predictions, personalise the content they show to each individual, and re-target them by showing them advertisements that promote further behaviours. They are therefore very powerful “Influencers”.

“Algorithm Influencers” - From Dr Nihara Krause MBE

7

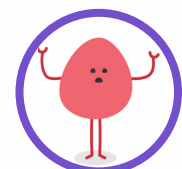
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“AI-Grow-ithm” Influencers can lead to bias, manipulation, adverse behaviour, and discrimination.



“Aggro-rithm” Influencers use the data you have inputted and seem to know what you are thinking or who you are.

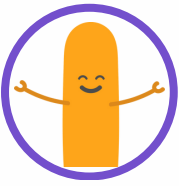


“Aggressive-rithm” Influencers show unrequested information or images which may be disturbing, upsetting or make you feel bad or self-conscious about yourself.



“Advert-rithm” Influencers show users content and ads about things you care about so it's easy to be fooled and to end up spending loads of money.

“Al-Grow-ithm” Influencers



Machine learning and predictions mean that whatever topics might be trending, sensational or inaccurate get added and presented as though it is a personalised menu for you. If the trending information is negative, you will get to see it and since the negative information will be mixed up with more personalised information, it can be very influential.

“Al-Grow-ithm” Influencers can lead to bias, manipulation, adverse behaviour, and discrimination.

What can you do?



“Al-Grow-ithm” Influencers can only grow if you provide them with information. See yourself as the puppeteer rather than the puppet. To avoid being under their influence, don't provide too much data!



Check privacy policies and what is done with your data, use secure search engines such as ‘DuckDuckGo’ since no data is stored, and think about the search words you use - the more ‘sensational’ or in-trend they are, the more likely you will get sent content.

“Aggro-rithm” Influencers



The more data that's provided online and on social media (e.g. browsing, location, demographics, searches, likes, friends) the more they relate individualised content to the person. This can happen within seconds.

For example, if you put in your age, gender, and location. “Aggro-rithm” Influencers are very powerful influencers because they seem to know what you are thinking or who you are. You can test the power of “Aggro-rithm” Influencers by comparing what your friends ‘For You’ page or their ‘Explore’ page. You may both have put in similar search words but will not be shown the same things.

What can you do?



To counter “Aggro-rithm” Influencers, remind yourself of other trustworthy influencers in your life and their values.



If their views are different to “Aggro-rithm” Influencers, adopt the values of the people you trust instead.






Check out “Aggro-rithm” ideas by running them by trusted adults, an older sibling, or a wise friend to put things in perspective.



Sometimes you might see unwanted and unrequested information or images pop up or start invading your feed which might be disturbing, upsetting or make you feel bad or self-conscious about yourself.

“Don’t let “Aggressive-rithm” Influencers change you. Take steps to make them go away instead!

Tips to help you feel more resilient

-  Check-in with yourself. Take a moment to reflect on the impact of the information – on your emotions and in how you think. If it’s causing a negative response, move away.
-  Test your moral compass: Represent your originality through posting your ideas in your newsfeed to help influence recommender systems. Use a diary as a way of staying connected with how you are and keep check on the direction you want to go.
-  Hold on to your values and who you are. Don’t be a sheep, be a shepherd. If you have a view then don’t feel under pressure to change it, even if others are.







“Advert-rithm” Influencers



Have you ever clicked on an article about a specific shoe and then over the coming days/weeks, you’ve found you’re being shown several shoe adverts?

“Advert-rithm” Influencers cleverly personalise what you like and tend to show users content and ads about things they care about, so it’s easy to be fooled and to end up spending loads of money.

What can you do?

-  To become less charmed to spend, remember that the adverts you are seeing are paid for by companies who use social media as their shop fronts.
-  Stop and think, before you pay.
-  You can also get effective ad blockers, although check that they don’t cost.
-  Unsubscribe from store newsletters or any lists of things on shop wish-lists.
-  Don’t save debit/credit cards on sites where you shop, instead enter card details manually.
-  Delete apps that make buying easier.

Some general steps to defeat algorithm influencers



Tip 1: Click on the good to clean your feed

Lots of young people find ways of managing their news feed, by being careful about what they click on. Some will click on just positive content, to try and train the algorithm not to send negative or extreme content.



Tip 2: Be mindful rather than mindless

Notice the impact of your engagement with online information. You wouldn't accept encountering threat in your offline line, so don't accept it on your online life.



Tip 3: Plan ahead

Chances are, with the best digital skills in the world, you will sometimes see something extreme and upsetting, so have a plan of who you will turn to for support.



Tip 4: It's not your fault

Technology is complicated and it is impossible for anyone to get everything right.



Tip 5: If it gets too much

Report what upsets you, talk to people you trust, and have a break from being online to get some perspective. There's also some very helpful resources, such as those below.

Signposts for additional support:

- [How to report and block someone on social media](#)
- [Dealing with cyberbullying](#)
- [How to get a photo removed from the internet or stop it being shared](#)
- [How to report harmful content online](#)
- [Are you worried about online sexual abuse/the way someone has been communicating with you online?](#)
- ['A place to find help, support and advice on how to live your best online life'](#)

shout
85258

Free text service for urgent support: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

ChildLine
0800 1111

Childline: Call 0800 1111

NSPCC

NSPCC: Call 0808 800 5000

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Mental health support and online advice: <https://stem4.org.uk/>

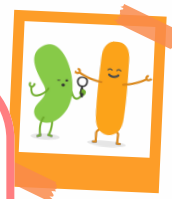
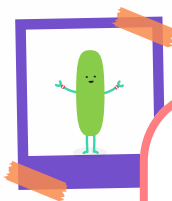
#ControlWhatYouPost



Tip 1: THINK before you post




- ? What's the reason behind your post? Ask yourself 'what do I hope to gain from this'?
- ? What do you want to say? How will it affect you immediately? How will it affect you later?
- ? How much are you sharing? Little is better than oversharing.
- ? How will it affect people reading or seeing your post? Is this the reaction you want?
- ? How will you deal with not getting the result you hoped for?

Say things online that you would be happy to wear on the front of your T-Shirt.



Remember you are visible online. Stick photos of yourself near your computer or on your phone so that you can remind yourself of who you are and your values.

Tip 2: Calm EMOTIONS before you post

-  If you are feeling strong emotions (more than a self-rating of 7 out of 10, where 10 is very intense emotions) then deal with your emotions first.
-  Be true to yourself online. This means not creating a false image online (to explain 'false' - not over editing, over self-promoting, fake images, and made-up information).
-  Sharing information about others? Ask their permission first.



Check in with how you are feeling before you post something.

How to fix things if something goes wrong



If you have posted something that you wish you hadn't, here is what you can do.

1. **Delete the content** - even if people have seen your post, there is still time to delete the content and therefore limit the impact it may have.

2. **Say sorry** - if something you posted has inadvertently upset someone then it is important to listen to them and apologise for the harm you may have caused.

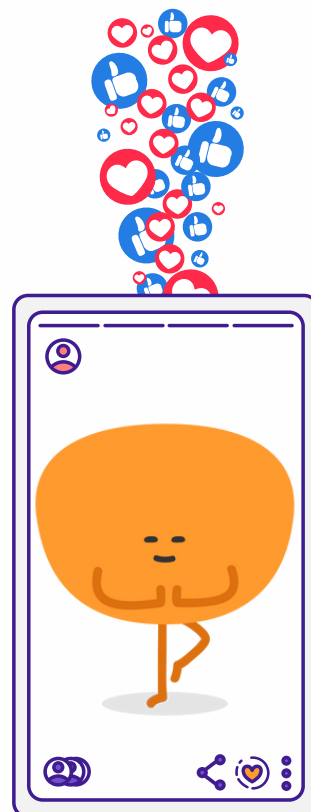


Remember - we all make mistakes! Speak to friends or family about how you are feeling and try to use this as a learning opportunity.

12

If you are an influencer

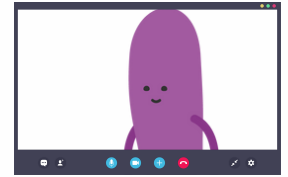
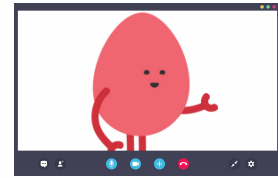
1. Think of your motives for posting.
2. Keep your integrity high – that means checking how accurate what you post is.
3. Think of your audience. Not everyone who accesses your content will be well, at an age when they can make their own decisions, or want to be influenced negatively.
4. Make your messages safe by setting guidelines on who it's for, the sources, whether there is brand alignment or monetising.
5. Ask someone else to read the content before you post.
6. Don't overshare. Even if you think it might help someone else, protect yourself online.
7. Remember relationships with followers are two dimensional – you don't know them, and they don't know you (even if they think they do from what you share).



Chapter Two

#ControlYourConnections

Young people told us one of the main reasons they go online is to connect with others.



I joined a group for people who have ASD and like horse riding online. I don't live anywhere near a stable and it's fun to talk about horses.

Answered by a young person

How do you connect with people online?

Asked by stem4

It's the way you find out about what's going on.

Answered by a young person

I like catching up with my friends after school. It's relaxing to go online. We have a laugh and talk about the day.

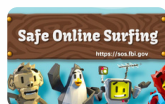
Answered by a young person

The interactions we have with people affect the way we feel about life. Close relationships keep us grounded and influence our happiness. They provide psychological space and safety, which, in turn, helps us to learn and explore.

Engaging positively with people we don't know helps us feel that we belong to a larger community and can increase our sense of self-worth. Engaging negatively with people, such as those being hostile or aggressive, is more likely to lead to isolation and low mood.

Researchers report that people with strong connections have less stress-related health conditions, lower risk of mental illness and faster recovery from trauma and illness.

Further Resources:



NetSmartzKids

Online vs Offline Connections

Pros

VS

Cons



Any time, any place

Our phones allow us to remain connected to friends and family on a consistent and regular basis. This could also mean staying connected with friends who are abroad, who you would otherwise be unable to connect with.



Different modes of communication

Whether it is on the phone, over text, on social media or with video calls, there are so many ways to speak with loved ones.



Support networks

It isn't always possible to see our loved ones when we need them and so the digital age enables us to feel less isolated.



New friends from new places

Friends can be formed online who you would otherwise not have crossed paths with! Bonding over shared hobbies and interests is a helpful basis for developing a close connection!



Quantity > quality interactions

Digital communication often lacks the nuanced emotional connection of face-to-face interactions, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.



Overwhelming

The endless possibility of being available to speak with other people can take its toll. Without breaks from connecting online we can become overwhelmed and burnt out!



Surface level interactions

The interactions we have online do not have the same quality as our offline ones. We are social beings and so need to make sure we are also connecting with others offline!



Potential risks

It can be harder to judge how trustworthy a person we have met online is. There are some people who use digital connections to exploit young people and so it is important to be aware of this when forming online relationships.

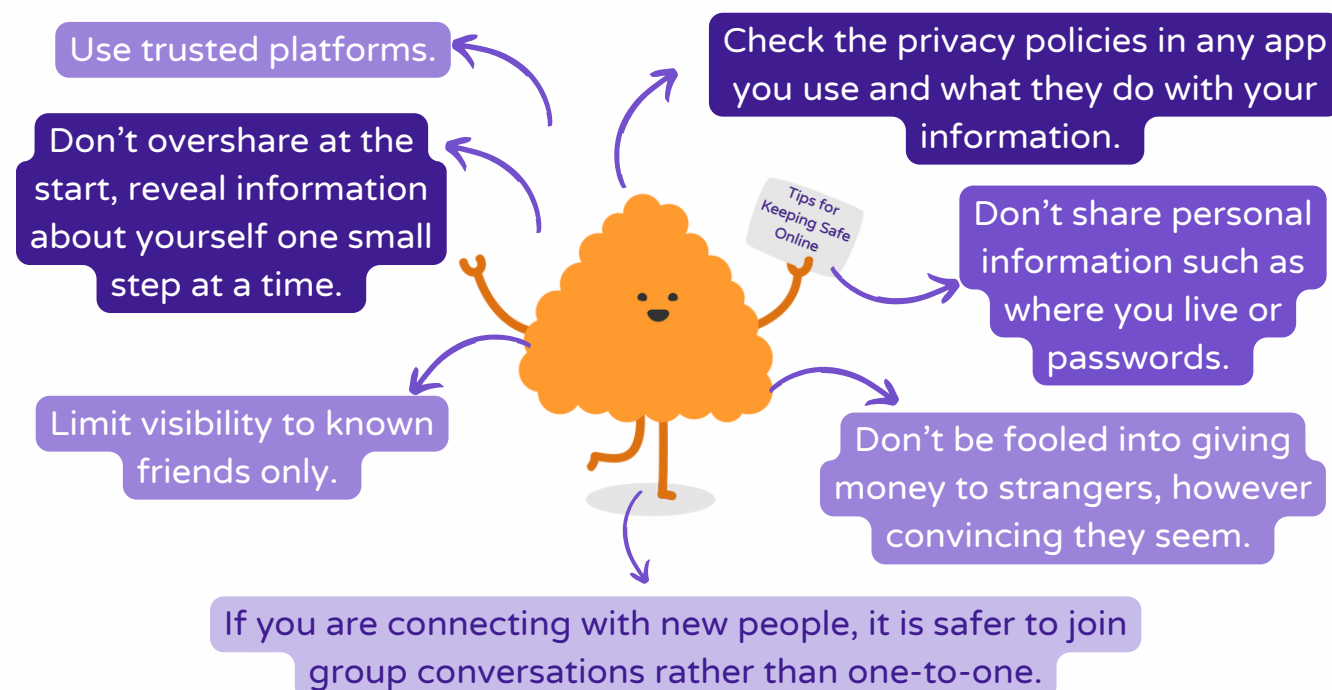
I like meeting people who share the same interests as me online. I think it's the same, because it's as a group, but then again, I don't know if that's true.



Making new connections and keeping safe

Connecting with new people can be exciting, but it's important to keep safe.

Some basic steps to keeping safe include:



Online Safety Top Tips

- ⚠ Be careful if they ask for personal information / photos from the beginning of the connection.
- ⚠ It might feel exciting or flattering but don't send nude photographs to someone you don't know.
- ⚠ If they ask you to switch to another platform to connect, say no. This is often because they can get more personal information from you.
- ⚠ Don't trust in photographs. Ask them to write a unique sentence you give them and take a photograph of them holding that to send to you straight away.
- ⚠ Report suspicious activities or anyone behaving inappropriately.
- ⚠ Tell your parents or a responsible adult of your online activities, however embarrassed you might be, they will be able to help you.
- ⚠ Stay informed of the latest online scams and how to keep safe.
- ⚠ Don't pay out money because you are afraid they will tell on you, even if you think you've done something wrong.

How to deal with misunderstandings online

It's easy to get things wrong online. Although you may have meant one thing, the other person may have read or understood something different.

To deal with communication misunderstandings:

💡 Try and get to the root of the problem.

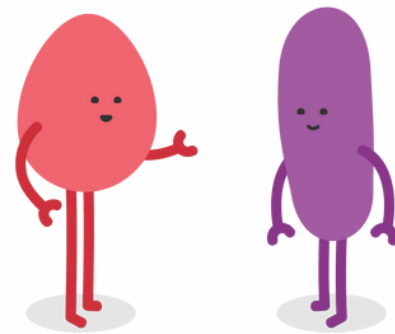
💡 Ask – what do they think it means?

💡 Listen – hear what they say. Don't jump to conclusions.

💡 Acknowledge – the impact needs acknowledgement. When people are hurt, they don't listen until their hurt is heard.

💡 Explain – work on resolving the misunderstanding. Apologise if you've got it wrong.

💡 Be constructive - show you care about the relationship and that you want to move forward.



16

How to deal with a breakdown of confidentiality

Sometimes, friends might think it's funny or a joke to post something about a person. Stop! Think about the consequences. Whilst it might be a joke to some people, it can be embarrassing and humiliating to others. Screenshots may be taken before something is taken down and it may spread faster than expected. Everything is recorded and stored somewhere too, although, of course, the internet is vast and it might be hard to find.

Sharing something confidential online, making someone feel small or shamed or spreading rumours is a form of bullying. Here is how to deal with a breakdown of confidentiality:

💡 Take a screenshot of the evidence.

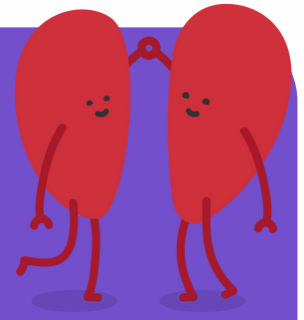
💡 Report this to a trusted adult and block the person or people

💡 Don't share personal information online, and don't share your location with someone you don't know.

💡 If personal information about your address, phone number or any other information has been shared, report this to the social media platform it's on and they can take it down.

Sexting

Whilst sharing intimate relationships with a romantic partner might be part of being in love, sadly, people do fall out of love and intimate images might be shared online, even if not by the romantic partner but by someone else who might discover it on their phone.








Exchanging intimate images is illegal but more importantly it can affect how you feel about yourself, and how others see you, in a deeply embarrassing or shameful way.

The South West Grid for Learning Trust and UK Safer Internet Centre have produced a brilliant [guide](#) on 'sexting' and what to do if a sexual image you have sent has been shared without your consent.



If something goes wrong, it is important to know that there is plenty of support available to you. Here are some things you can do:

-  Speak to someone you trust about what has happened and try and plan how you can handle the situation.
-  If you have been sent a nude picture of someone else, delete it and do not share it.
-  If you know the person whose picture is being distributed, call them and tell them.
-  Sharing naked pictures of someone who is under 18 is a crime. Inform an adult of your concern for the person whose picture is being distributed.
-  You are not an object. Ignore and reject relationship pressure to share nude pictures if you are uncomfortable.

Further Resources:



Report Remove

Under 18 year olds can use Childline and IWF's Report Remove tool to see if the image can be removed.



Take it Down

Take it Down can remove any sexually explicit images or videos of underage people by assigning a unique digital footprint.

Dealing with FOMO



I get sad when I can see my friends are out together. I don't know why they don't ask me.

Feeling left out online can be isolating. Technology lends itself to constantly seeing highlights of other people's lives. This can often make us feel like we are falling behind, which creates anxious feelings. It can also bring about pressure to keep up.

FOMO can be worse for people who have low self-esteem, where a negative view of yourself inevitably means you compare yourself less favourably to others or think you might be left behind for a particular reason that reflects something bad about you. It also affects people who are unhappy or have low mood, making them feel that they are missing out on things that might make them happy. Focussing on what you don't have can lead to further unhappiness, trapping a person in even more negativity.

Don't get mad and say or do something you might regret later.

Have a social media break.

Appreciate what you have by focussing on some of the good things you have in your life and accepting that it's fine to not have everything.

Tips for dealing with FOMO

Spend more time offline and in person. Genuine connections can bring about more happiness and fulfilment.

Acknowledge your feelings and reflect on whether there may be a specific reason why you are left out. Be balanced in your reflections – think about it from both their perspective and yours.

Talking to someone you trust about what's happening, and how it makes you feel, is helpful. They may also be able to give you some objective tips and some new perspectives.



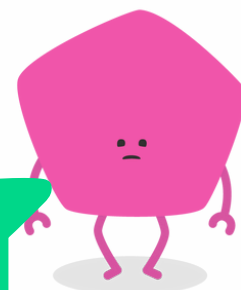
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<https://clearfear.stem4.org.uk/>

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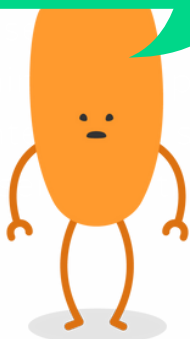
Comparison



I go online to find out how well I'm doing on my fitness as compared with my gym group. We get very competitive with each other. Most of the time it's good and keeps me to my goal but sometimes it makes me feel stressed and under pressure.

Comparing yourself to others in a normal human response. Connection on socials provides easy opportunity for social comparison and as they become more interactive, the opportunity for social comparison increases.

Every time I go online I find myself comparing myself to my friends, influencers and celebrities. I always end up feeling like I'm the worst.



Many people who go online, when low, are searching for social connections that make them feel less alone in their struggles, and hopefully brighter. It can feel like such a relief to find someone who seems to feel the same as you do, almost like a twin. Similarly, like having a twin, it can create a sense of connection and comparison.

However, everyone is different, and it is important to not give into pressure to feel the same as someone who may be feeling either better or worse than you.



Notice what posts make you feel down on yourself. A down reaction to a post will be due to how you think about and interpret that post.



Catch your 'putting yourself down mindset' and see if you can generate an 'accepting yourself mindset' instead. For example, instead of thinking 'I'm not as good' think 'I'm who I am and they are who they are.' Or 'I'm my own unique person'.

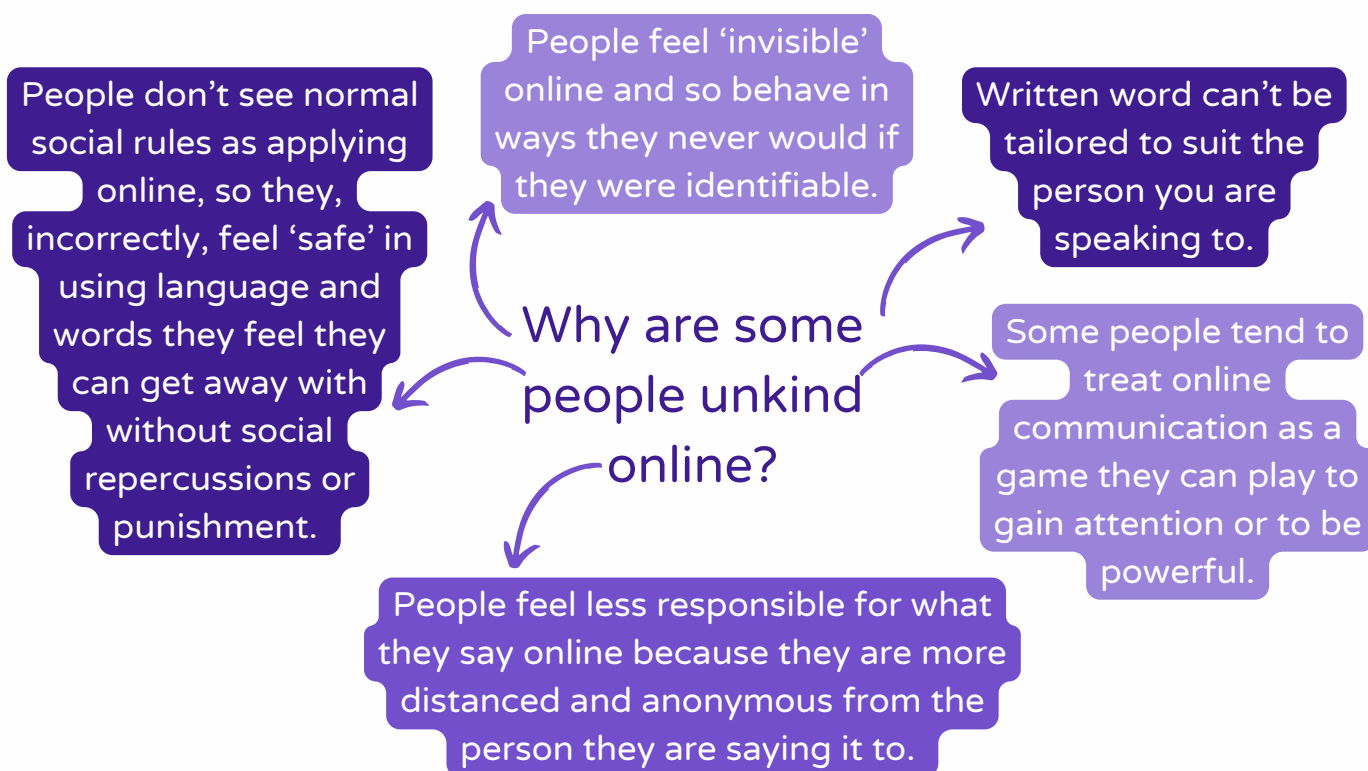


Comparison when in recovery

It can be difficult when getting better means leaving friends behind. Have a break whilst you figure out the recovering you and seek positive support to give yourself a chance to improve.

Dealing with hurtful language

People act differently online to how they are face-to-face. The repercussions are often less clear and it can be more difficult to judge tone and intention. So, it's more common for online behaviour to be less kind.

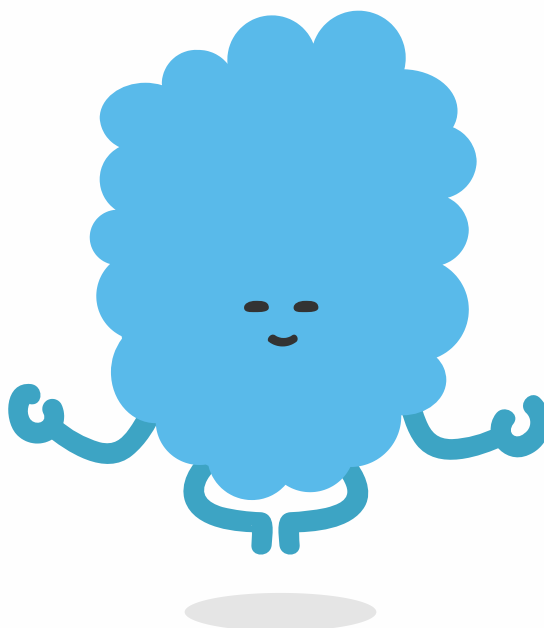


20

Top Tips

💡 Simmer down rather than 'stew'. Try not to go over and over hurtful words. Instead, do something calming, write down what you are thinking instead or replace the hurtful words with positive ones.

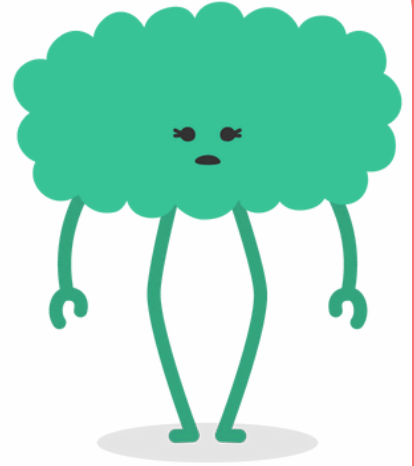
💡 Remember, there is a person on the other end and once something is said, it's remembered. So, be visible not invisible and think before you post.











Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when technology is used to send messages or images intended to embarrass, harass, spread rumours, threaten, and hurt a person.

Bullying is wrong in whatever format it is carried out in. So here are some tips to protect yourself from cyberbullying.



-  Tell a trusted adult or call Childline on 0800 11 11.
-  Keep evidence of the messages. Don't delete anything.
-  Show a record of the messages to the trusted adult you report what's happening to.
-  Don't forward any messages on to show how terrible the person sending it is.
-  Resist the temptation to retaliate or fight back.
-  If you can, report the incident to the administrator of the website. Most social media apps have a cyberbullying report centre. You can also report abuse to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Centre).
-  If you have been experiencing a mental ill-health difficulty, then cyberbullying may make your symptoms worse, for example increased anxiety, low self-worth, or low mood. Check out stem4 apps [Clear Fear](#), [Worth Warrior](#), and [Move Mood](#) to help stabilise and manage feelings, and seek help and support from a mental health professional.
-  Surround yourself with supportive friends. Do things together you enjoy and make sure you notice how they value you.

There are many sources of support. They include people in your family, school resources, your GP, Childline (0800 11 11) and The Mix (0808 808 4994).

Cyberbullying might take some time to stop. Don't give up, keep reporting it until it does.

Trolling



I felt like I was attacked by a mob, one troll posted a hate comment and the next minute I had a number of trolls all post more and more vicious comments.

Trolls are people who deliberately post upsetting comments which other trolls then pile on top of to join the attack. The intention of a troll is to 'bait', which means trying to get an emotional reaction or argument.

As trolls seek to provoke intense reactions in others, they pick on personal material, and will often create online hate by picking on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Because they promote hate, trolls post under fake names or anonymously.

The following tips may give you some idea as to what can help, should trolls appear:

Tip 1: Starve the trolls

You may recognise that there are times when someone is looking for an argument or fight, and it is best not to engage with them when they are in this mood. Engaging with them only seems to lead to a spiral of ever more outrageous comments to keep you involved. If you can step back from that fight, this usually leads to the troll deciding to go elsewhere. It's tough, but ignoring them can be very effective.

Tip 2: Keep a record

Trolls can go back and delete provocative comments, as some bullies might also do, and so whenever you see something offensive or upsetting, try to take a screenshot. If things get worse, it is good to have got as much evidence as possible for platform moderators or even the police.

Tip 3: Empower yourself

It doesn't come easily to block or report someone, even when they are behaving inappropriately. But sadly, kindness is not always enough, and it is a good idea to remind yourself how to block and report someone that you find concerning. It is good to check whether a particular app has any other support or guidance to help you manage a difficult situation in the app.

It is always important to call out inappropriate behaviour because it is unlikely that it will be just happening to you.

Tip 4: Step back from social media

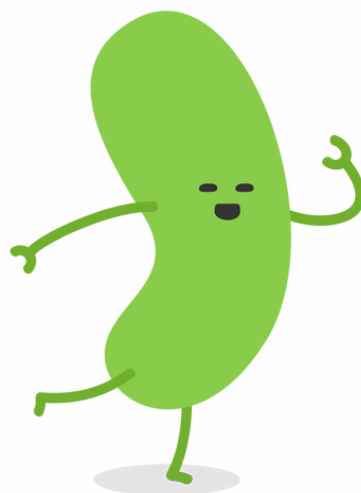
Allow yourself a break from it all, so you can reconnect again with what is important to you.

Tip 5: Connect with others you trust

If you have experienced trolling, make sure you connect with those around you if anything is troubling you; a partner, friends, family, or colleagues can help you think better, and consider what response might be needed, if anything.

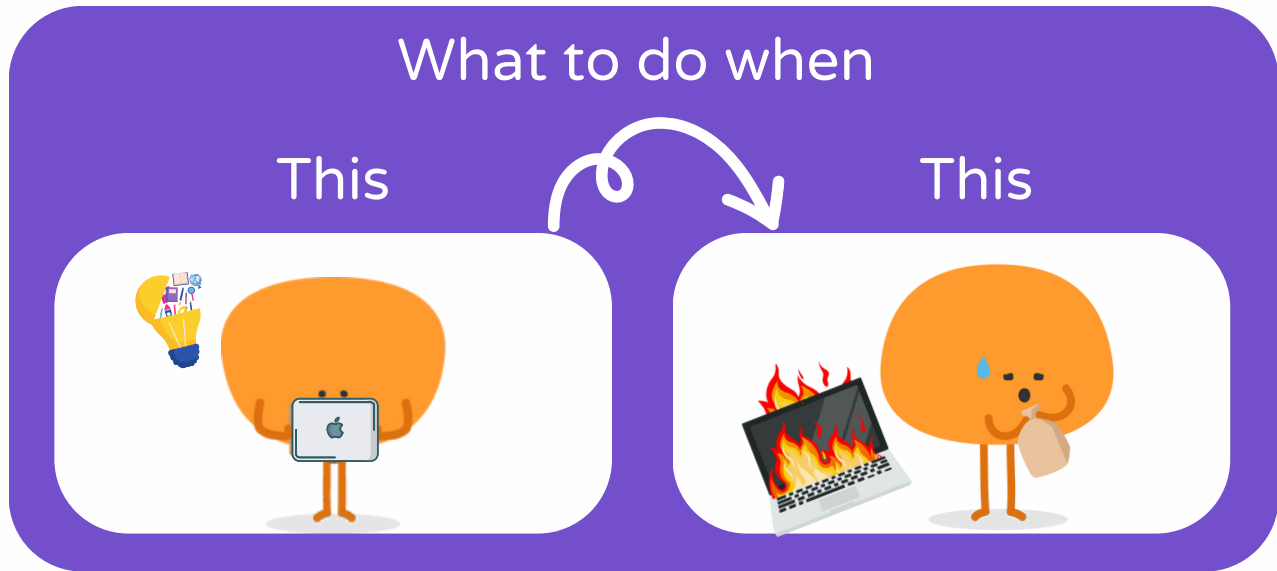
Tip 6: Don't share if you are being targeted

It may be tempting to call out a troll and make public what they are doing. But that might also draw the attention of other trolls. Ignoring, blocking, and reporting them may be better than attracting the wrong type of attention.



Chapter Three

#ControlYourTime



Being online is helpful for unwinding, whether that is watching Netflix or playing your favourite game.

However, there is a point at which your time spent online can become unhealthy. For example, when you are skipping meals, missing sleep or finding your general well-being is being negatively affected by your time online.

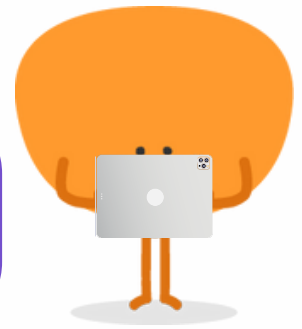
Becoming aware of how your screen time affects you is helpful in seeing when things may be starting to go wrong.

The earlier you can make small steps to break negative patterns of behaviour, learn behaviour regulation and support your mental wellbeing, the less likely issues such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders are to become out of control.

Some common online promoted binge behaviours

Binge watching and scrolling

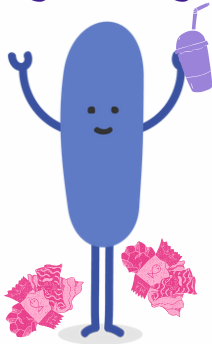
With so much choice, and so many series and programmes, accessible with the touch of a button, it's easy to lose time watching more than you planned to online or scrolling on socials for longer than you expected.



Some tips include:

- With any binge behaviour, it's useful to set a time limit to scroll or a time or number of episodes limit.
- If that's hard to do, then plan to watch certain 'addictive' programmes with someone else so that there's shared curbing of behaviour, or only go on socials at a certain time.
- 'Time boxing' tasks is helpful, where you create 'boxes' of time frames to complete prioritised tasks and then 'reward' getting things done by watching or scrolling right at the end.
- The stem4 Move Mood app can help set goals and manage tasks.
- If you know that your sleep will be disrupted by binge watching, or bingeing on social media, then switch to watch or read at an awake time.

Binge eating



Binge eating is a behaviour that's related to thoughts and emotions that trigger eating.

If there are food advertisements, special delivery offers, two for one offers, etc. online, which are not just shown but repeated regularly, they act as triggers to eating behaviour.

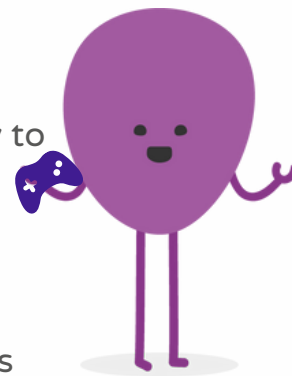
Some tips include:

- To help identify your triggers, track when your binges happen – what you were thinking, feeling, watching and what food you ate. Eating regularly and not in front of a screen, or after watching endless food programmes, photographs, or recipes online, helps curb binges.
- Practising eating mindfully is also helpful. So notice what you enjoy eating, the taste, and how full you feel instead of being distracted by what you may be doing or watching online. Do not have binge food handy. Manage stress effectively.
- The key to change is to address the physical, thought-based and emotional aspects to binge eating. See a professional for help. You can also use the stem4 Worth Warrior app and also the Calm Harm app to help manage binge behaviour.

@stem4org • youthmentalhealthday.co.uk

Gaming

Whilst playing games online is entertaining, it's not always easy to get a balance to have a healthy lifestyle alongside having fun.



Some tips include:

- Setting clear time limits (and sticking to them!).
- Trying to prioritise what you have to do – do the hard things first and then end with games.
- Have times and areas which are games free.
- Plan offline activities with friends.
- Notice how gaming is affecting both your physical and mental health. Take steps to have breaks if you notice negative effects on either.
- Monitor how much you are spending. Gaming companies market their products in clever ways – they offer micro purchases, but on many things, and if regular purchases of small things are made, they will build up to large amounts pretty quickly. They also incentivise by rewarding spending behaviour.

Gambling



Gambling online, defined as paying to do something for chance, often comes in disguise, such as a game that may need money to win something. Don't be fooled by 'cute' images or 'endorsement' by people you follow or admire, since these may be a way to market the product and fool you into parting with money.

Some tips include:

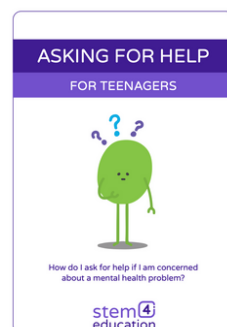
- Talk to someone about the risks, including the impact on finances and mental health.
- Remember: the legal age for gambling is 18 for a reason.
- Worried about a gambling habit? For support visit GamCare <https://www.gamcare.org.uk/>.

stem4's Asking for Help booklet

For tips on how to talk to a friend, parent, teacher, or GP about how you feel, Asking for Help provides guidance on where to start.


Download the booklet at:


stem4.org.uk/resources





Here are some tips on planning a successful digital detox

A digital detox involves having a break from screens and devices. Basically, it's the mind's equivalent to having a holiday (which we all know is good for us) and not only helps our mind, but also our body to have a break.


 **Tip 1:** Decide on why you are doing it (make it a good cause) and tell people of your plans.


 **Tip 7:** Mark the days with something positive you achieved. Give yourself a cheer when you've achieved your goal.


 **Tip 2:** Draw up a timetable of what you are going to do instead – make it fun!


 **Tip 8:** Plan your return. Once you feel less stressed or overwhelmed, plan how you will return to the news and social media safely. Decide on what limits you can continue with, for example, setting yourself some permanent, realistic time limits.

 **Tip 3:** Turn off notifications and newsfeeds.

 **Tip 4:** Try and prioritise taking some time for yourself. Being stressed and anxious will slow you down from participating in the way you would like to anyway.

 **Tip 9:** Brainstorm next steps. If you want to make your digital detox have a long-lasting impact, think about different ways in which you might want to access the information and connections you do offline, rather than online.

 **Tip 5:** Get an enjoyable night-time routine to stop yourself from reaching out for old habits.

 **Tip 6:** Get yourself an old-fashioned clock if it helps with time keeping.

Challenge yourself to complete a Youth Mental Health Day digital detox on the 19th of September.



Ongoing self-care tips in a digital world

If you are spending a lot of time looking at a screen, whether gaming, watching videos, messaging, or working, you may also be so immersed in what you are doing that you lose track of time and your self-care falls to the wayside.

Here are some activities that can improve your physical and mental wellbeing, which you might want to check yourself against from time to time:

Tip 1: Connect with yourself.

There's no relationship more important than the one you have with yourself. Liking yourself helps build confidence, and knowing yourself helps you make positive decisions about how to stand up for yourself, what to do, where to go and who to be with. Connecting with yourself requires giving yourself time to stop, reflect and notice your thoughts, emotions, sensations, impulses and reactions, and based on this, make positive choices that reflect your worth.

Tip 2: Keep active.

Remind yourself to keep moving throughout the day. It will improve your mood, too (not just your physical health!). The free Move Mood app can help you improve your mood by encouraging you to increase your motivation to carry out a variety of tasks to help you to move forward, take control and feel positive.



Use the Move Mood app to help you improve your mood by encouraging you to increase your motivation to carry out a variety of tasks, in order to help you to move forward, take control and feel positive.

<https://movemood.stem4.org.uk/>

Tip 3: Eat well.

Eat a balanced diet.

Tip 4: Drink sensibly.

Stay hydrated and try to avoid too much caffeine/alcohol.

Tip 5: Take a break.

You are not a robot. Take regular breaks in addition to the digital detox outlined here. Mini breaks are effective ways to reduce mini bouts of stress.

Ongoing self-care tips in a digital world



Tip 6: Keep in touch.

Get a mood and energy boost from connecting with friends and family in real life.



Tip 7: Ask for help.

When you feel stuck in a pattern of too much digital use, find the courage to ask for help.



Tip 8: Do something you are good at.

A feeling of achievement, even doing something small, can help reduce feelings of stress.



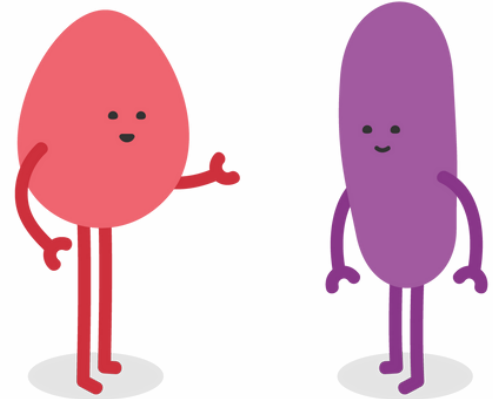
Tip 9: Care for others.

Make time to do something for someone important to you.

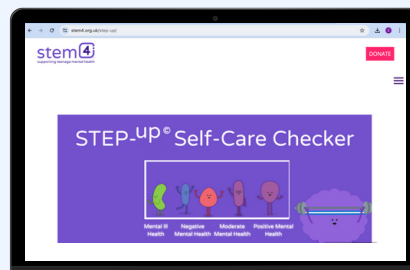


Tip 10: Accept who you are.

Be kind to yourself, you deserve it.



Check your self-care score



<https://stem4.org.uk/step-up/>

Chapter Four

#ControlYourFollow



Looking for inspiration from others is a natural human instinct. We want to follow people who do amazing things in incredible places, because we hope that one day we will be able to do the same.

It is helpful to be mindful of who you are following so that you are in control of the content you are seeing.

Consider asking yourself these questions with regard to who you choose to follow

- ? How do I **feel** when I see their content? Does it make me feel happy or interest me? Or do I feel uncomfortable at all or some of their posts?
- ? **Why** am I following this person? Is it because I 'like' what they are posting? Or do I have another reason, such as following them because I want to look the same as they do?

Wised up on influencers?

F acts
A spirations
M oney
E nd Result



If you hold your values close, you will find it easier to withstand the pressure to follow trends just because everyone else is following them.

Positive impacts of social media on mental health

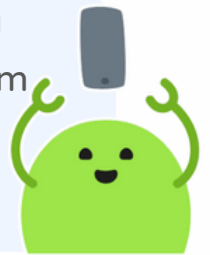


Influencers and public figures have used their platforms to show others that they are not alone in the mental health challenges they may be facing. For example, Tom Holland shared in 2022 that he would be taking a break from social media to look after his mental health.



One positive outcome of the digital age we live in, from the lens of mental health, is that social media platforms have created spaces in which the stigma surrounding mental health challenges has been challenged.

Do you follow an influencer or public figure who makes you feel better about yourself or who you think uses their platform to spread a positive message? Tag us and let us know at @stem4org and use the hashtag #ControlYourScroll!



What are the negatives of following influencers for inspiration?



Especially when you're young, it can be hard watching or listening to influencers / successful gamers, because it feels like they have achieved everything and have it all figured out.

This may make you feel less confident about yourself—whether about your family background, how you look, or what your values are.



It can be exhausting trying to conform to what you think you should be doing, rather than what feels right and authentic for you.



There are also many people who use their platforms to spread information which may be inaccurate or even worse, harmful to others.



Social media can help with identifying common symptoms of mental health challenges you may be experiencing. But there is always a risk that people will wrongly self-identify with a mental health challenge that is not correct for their situation.



Who are we?

We are stem4, the UK's leading digital mental health charity for children and young people. We offer a suite of 5 evidence-based mental health apps that support various mental health conditions as well as digitally-delivered mental health literacy programmes in schools.

We also bridge the digital divide by offering in-person facilitation of mental health education in schools and mental health training of parents and carers, educators, and health professionals, as well as providing multiple clinically informed, printable resources.

Our free offerings help thousands of young people manage anxiety, self-harm, depression and eating disorders across the UK every single day, whilst also learning to build resilience and become safe online.

Our Mission

Immediate Evidence-Based Support

- To ensure that every young person gets the immediate, evidence-based mental health support that they deserve – coming from a disadvantaged background or where access to early resources are sparse should not be a barrier.

Early Intervention

- To provide earlier intervention at a bigger scale than is possible via the public health system, ensuring that low-level mental health issues do not escalate into long-term mental health crises.

Enabling a Support Network

- To provide everyone who supports a child or a young person, including families and carers, educators and health professionals, with a range of evidence-based resources to maximise their child or young person's wellbeing.

Solid Foundation

- To enable children and young people to have a solid mental health foundation, ensuring they can thrive and lead fulfilling lives.

Join the Youth Mental Health Day School Fundraising Challenge!



About the challenge

The Youth Mental Health Day School Fundraising Challenge is an exciting opportunity for you to raise awareness and support for youth mental health. By participating, you contribute to vital mental health initiatives that help young people across the country.



The school that raises the most awareness and money for stem4 by the 3rd of October will be crowned **stem4's 2024 Ambassador School**.

Where the money goes

We are on a mission to ensure that every young person, whatever their background or circumstances, has access to high quality, evidence-based mental health support. By joining the challenge, you'll help us provide evidence-based psychological support to millions of young people in need.

How to get involved

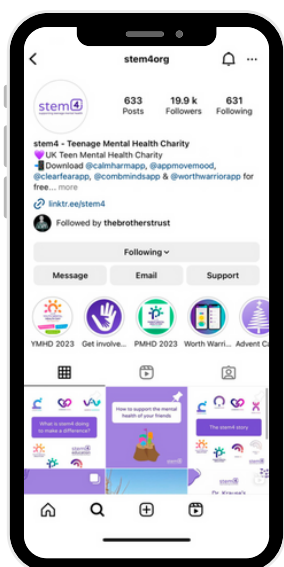
1. Get your teacher to register your school: Your teacher needs to register your school to participate at stem4.org.uk/ymhdfundraisingchallenge.
2. Plan Your Fundraiser: Here are some fun and effective fundraising ideas:
 - **Sponsored Walks/Runs:** Organise a sponsored walk or run.
 - **Bake Sales:** Host a bake sale at school, offering delicious treats in exchange for donations.
 - **Talent Shows:** Showcase your talents and invite family and friends to donate in support of your performance.
 - **Themed Dress Days:** Have a #GoPurple day where everyone wears something purple to school and pays a small fee to participate.

Let us know what you have planned by emailing ymhd@stem4.org.uk.

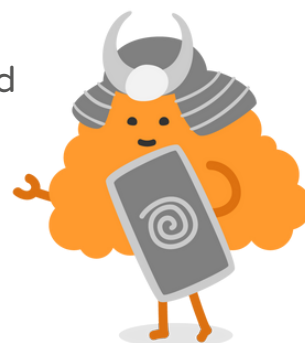
Share your #stem4YMHD

No matter how you raise awareness, start conversations, or promote positive mental health this Youth Mental Health Day, stem4 would love to hear about it!

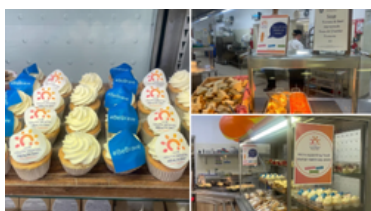
How to share your Youth Mental Health Day with us



1. Send us photos or videos of what you got up to! Email us at YMHD@stem4.org.uk.
2. Post your activities on social media and tag us [@stem4org](https://www.instagram.com/stem4org).
3. Remember to use our hashtags when you post ([#stem4YMHD](https://www.instagram.com/stem4YMHD) and [#ControlYourScroll](https://www.instagram.com/ControlYourScroll))!



Take a look at how YMHD supporters people got involved with our [#BeBrave](#) theme last year! Take a look back [here](#).



Woodbridge School

Students were encouraged to take part in a variety of activities surrounding the theme #BeBrave.



William Hume's Grammar School

Students shared ways they had recently shown bravery.



Chelsea Foundation

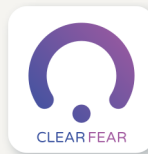
Chelsea Foundation delivered a #BeBrave workshop to school students on Youth Mental Health Day.



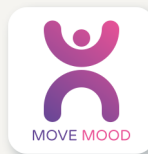
stem4's mental health apps



A free app to help teenagers resist or manage the urge to self-harm www.calmharm.stem4.org.uk • @calmharmapp



A free app to help children and young people manage the symptoms of anxiety www.clearfear.stem4.org.uk • @clearfearapp



A free app to help teenagers manage low mood and depression www.movemood.stem4.org.uk • @appmovemood



A free app to help families and friends provide mental health support www.combinedminds.stem4.org.uk • @combmindapp



A free app to help young people manage negative body image, poor self-worth, and related early-stage eating difficulties or disorders www.worthwarrior.stem4.org.uk • @worthwarriorapp

stem4's award-winning apps are available to download from the App Store and Google Play.



Please note that these apps are an aid in treatment but do not replace it.

stem4
supporting teenage mental health

www.stem4.org.uk • @stem4org

Developed by stem4 - Registered Charity No. 1144506

Signposts

Digital signposts

- How to report and block someone on social media: https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/11_18/lets-talk-about/online-safety/reporting-and-blocking/
- Dealing with cyberbullying: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-cyberbullying/>
- How to get a photo removed from the internet or stop it being shared: <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>
<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/>
- How to report harmful content online: <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/child/>
- Are you worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating with you online? Visit <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>
- A place to find help, support and advice on how to live your best online life: <https://www.bbc.com/ownit>
- Report Harmful Content Child Friendly Version reportharmfulcontent.com

Fact checking resources

- **BBC Verify**- BBC Verify comprises about 60 journalists who have formed a highly specialised operation with a range of forensic investigative skills and open source intelligence (Osint) capabilities. They are responsible for fact-checking, verifying video, countering disinformation, analysing data and - crucially - explaining complex stories in the pursuit of truth.
- **FullFact.org**- "Full Fact fights for the right information to reach the people who need it most, whether that's individuals making decisions about their health or who to vote for; or politicians debating the future of our country."
- **Fact Check (Washington Post)**- "The purpose of this website, and an accompanying column in the Sunday print edition of The Washington Post, is to "truth squad" the statements of political figures regarding issues of great importance, be they national, international or local."
- **Snopes**- "The definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation."
- **Duke Reporters' Lab: Fact Checking** Includes a database of global fact-checking sites, which can be viewed as a map or as a list; also includes how they identify fact-checkers.

General mental health signposts:

- Mental health support and online advice: <https://stem4.org.uk/>
- Free text service for urgent support: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258
- Childline: Call 0800 1111
- NSPCC: Call 0808 800 5000
- HOPELINE247 (Papyrus): Call 0800 068 4141 (free). Text 07860 039967. Email pat@papyrus-uk.org
- Samaritans: Call 116 123 (free). Email jo@samaritans.org
- NHS 111 or 999 in the case of an emergency

Go to <https://stem4.org.uk/further-advice/> for further support and signposting.



stem4

supporting teenage mental health

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Registered Charity No. 1144506

Company Registration No. 07779151

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