At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

'Likes' are a simple way for users to show that they like a post on social media. This could be anything from photos and videos to status updates and comments. The feature is widely used on several social media platforms and is extremely popular on Instagram and Facebook. It is often used by children to measure the success of their social media post and gauge opinion. However, it can also bring a number of social pressures, particularly if users start to question their own levels of popularity.

What parents need to know about SOCIAL PRESSURES LINKED TO 'LIKES'

DAMAGING TO SELF-ESTEEM

Your child may use likes to measure their own self-worth, with more likes instilling a **greater level of confidence and acceptance** amongst their friends and peers. However, children who only receive a small number may in turn feel a sense of rejection or **isolation and could potentially suffer from** low self-esteem issues, impacting them in other aspects of their life such as at school or in social settings.

AN ADDICTIVE FEATURE

Like features encourage children to stay online for longer. In doing so, your child is likely to engage with app's for longer periods than they otherwise would have wanted, checking their phone more frequently, including at night when they should be asleep. This could contribute towards screen addiction which can cause sleep deprivation and consequently a lack of focus during the next day at school.

UNREAL VIEW OF THE WORLD

Your child may follow celebrities or other popular individuals on social media who receive millions of likes. Not everything on social media is a **true reflection of the world and your** child may feel pressured into behaving in a similar way in real life or posting similar material in order to feel popular and achieve a similar level of self-worth.

COMPETITIVE CULTURE

Children will often compare the number of likes they receive for their post against their friends or followers, possibly evoking emotions of jealously or resentment. In a bid to increase their own status and receive more likes, this could lead to a competitive culture in which children try to better one another, potentially leading to them engaging in more and more riskier activities.

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#WakeUpWednesday

Safety Tips For Parents

FOLLOW OR BEFRIEND YOUR CHILD ONLINE

Using the same social media sites as your child and connecting with them online will allow you to keep an eye on what their interests are and who may **be influencing them. Following their** likes will help you build a picture of what your child is being exposed to and **what they find interesting.**

MONITOR MENTAL HEALTH

If your child does post on social media, it is important to monitor their feelings and emotions, supporting them and encouraging them to talk to you about what they may be experiencing. Explain to them that not everything online is real and that life is not dictated by how many likes a post may or may not get.

ENCOURAGE HOBBIES OR OTHER ACTIVITIES

Try to help reduce your child's screen time and need for social media through encouraging them do other things such as a sport or hobby or simply playing with friends outdoors. Supporting them to take up other activities that they enjoy can also help build self-esteem **and increase their own confidence.**

DISCUSS THE REAL WORLD

Talk to your child about online perceptions and about what they feel is and isn't important in their life. Try to establish an open and honest conversation and speak about what they feel is acceptable to post online and if they feel pressure to conform.

HELP TO BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

Try to help build your child's self-esteem through positivity and praise and listening to them if they are struggling with the way they look or feel. Talk to them about the positive aspect of their personality and help them understand that looks aren't everything. Try not to criticise or blame your child which could compound any negative thoughts they are already feeling.

Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has **been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in** court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

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