

When in Doubt, Talk It Out

Defining and encouraging Internet Brave behavior



Thematic overview

Activity 1: **When to get help**
Activity 2: **Report it online, too**

Themes

It's important that kids understand they're not on their own when they see content online that makes them feel uncomfortable – especially if it looks like they or someone else could get hurt. They should never hesitate to get help from someone they trust. It's also good for them to know there are different ways to be brave and take action, from talking things out offline to using reporting tools online.

Goals for children

- ✓ **Understand** what types of situations call for getting help or talking things out with a trusted adult.
- ✓ **Consider** what options there are for being brave and why bringing adults into the conversation is important.

When in Doubt, Talk It Out

Vocabulary



Courageous: Brave; not necessarily fearless, though, because people are especially brave when they're scared or nervous but take positive action anyway.

Compromised account: An online account that has been taken over by someone else so that you no longer have complete control of it.

Student agency: A step beyond a student using their voice to speak up, student agency is the capacity to act or make change; including protecting or standing up for oneself and others; often seen as a necessary part of citizenship.

Trust: Strong belief that something or someone is reliable, truthful, or able.

When to get help

One piece of advice that appears consistently throughout these thematics is: If children come across something that makes them feel uncomfortable or worse, encourage them to report it – be brave and talk to someone they trust who can help, including you, the principal, or a parent. Children should pick this up from any one of the thematics, but just to be sure, here’s a family discussion focused specifically on the “when in doubt, talk it out” principle. Below, you’ll find a list of situations in which talking it out can really help.

Important notes

1. *Children have been taught or conditioned not to “tattle” for so many generations that it has become a social norm, and bullying prevention experts have been working hard to help children understand the difference between “telling” and getting help. Help your children see that seeking support when hurtful things happen online is not “tattling”; it’s about getting help for themselves or peers when people are getting hurt.*
2. *Fostering open communication and reminding children you’re always there for backup support and appropriate reporting.*
3. *In the discussion below, any time children share about times they sought adult help, be sure the tone of the conversation is one that makes them feel proud and brave to have taken action, especially since they’re speaking up in front of peers.*

Goals for children



- ✓ **Recognize** that seeking help for oneself or others is a sign of strength.
- ✓ **Think out loud together** about situations where talking it out can really help.

Let’s talk



Here’s a whole list of situations you might run into online. We may not get through them all because I hope you’ll raise your hands when something on the list reminds you of a situation you’ve been in and what you did about it, so we can talk those situations out together.

Discussion topics



- 1. Ask your children** to silently read the list. While they do, ask them to think all about whether any of these situations happened to them, whether they wanted to ask for help in any of them and if they did or not.
 - You had this feeling that your account may have been compromised. (Discussion opportunity: What can you do to make your account security even stronger?)
 - You needed help remembering a password.
 - You were unsure whether something was a scam or thought you might have fallen for one. (Discussion opportunity: What are the warning signs?)
 - Someone tried to discuss something online with you that made you uncomfortable.
 - You received a creepy message or comment from a stranger. (Discussion opportunity: What makes something creepy?)
 - You wanted to discuss something someone said online that was really nice OR really mean.
 - You were concerned you may have shared something online you shouldn't have. Only tell us what it was if you feel comfortable sharing that, but even if you don't, tell us what you did about it.
 - You saw a peer being hurtful to another student online.
 - You saw someone threatening to start a fight or harm someone.
 - Someone posted a fake profile about another student.
 - You were concerned about another student because of something they posted or texted. (Discussion opportunity: Sometimes it's difficult to risk upsetting your friend, but isn't their safety and well-being more important?)
- 2. Ask your children** to tell what they did (or didn't do) and why.
- 3. Let's discuss** those situations.

Takeaway

It may not always seem like it, but being able to ask for help when you're not sure what to do is a brave thing to do. If it's to help you or someone heal something hurtful or stop harm from happening, it's both smart and courageous.

When in Doubt, Talk It Out: Activity 2

Report it online, too

Using a home device to demonstrate where to go to report inappropriate content and behavior in apps, you and your children consider various types of content, decide whether to report it, and talk about why or why not.

Goals for children



- ✓ **Be aware** of online tools for reporting abuse.
- ✓ **Consider** when to use them.
- ✓ **Talk about** why and when to report the abuse.

Let's talk



When meanness and other inappropriate content turn up online, people have options for taking action. In the last activity we talked about the most important one: talking it out with someone you trust. Another option is to report it to the app or service where you found it, which can help get the content deleted. It's important to get used to using online reporting tools.

Children should get in the habit of taking a screenshot of conversations or activity that's harmful or suspicious before using blocking and reporting tools (which could make a record of the activity inaccessible). This ensures that trusted adults can see what happened and help resolve this situation.

Activity



Materials needed:

- Handout: "Report it online, too!" worksheet

1. Figure out how to report a problem

Grab as many devices as your home has access to. Together, find the tools in at least three home-related accounts for reporting inappropriate content or behavior.

2. Go through the scenarios

Go through the seven situations on the worksheet.

3. Would you report it?

Ask children to say if they would report the content; then ask them to say if they wouldn't report it.

4. If so, why?

There is not just one right answer or approach. Make sure children know this before discussion begins.

Takeaway

Most apps and services have tools for reporting and/or blocking inappropriate content, and it can help the people involved, their community, and the platforms themselves if we use those tools. Before blocking or reporting inappropriate content, it's always wise to take a screenshot so that you have a record of the situation.

Continued on the next page →

Worksheet: Activity 2

Report it online, too

Make your children read each scenario below and ask them if they would report it in the app or service where they found it. Let's them Prepare to explain why they would or wouldn't report it and explain why they chose that option, then discuss those choices.

Note: there is not one right choice to make, which is why discussion is helpful.

No one should feel bad about what they chose to do. Even adults don't always know when or how to report.

Situation 1

A student posts a group photo in a public account, and you hate the way you look in it. Would you report that photo or not? How can you respond?

Situation 2

Someone creates an account of a student you know using their name and photo. They turned the photo into a meme and drew a moustache and other weird facial features on it, turning the photo into a joke. Would you report the account or not?

Situation 3

Someone posts lots of mean comments about a student in your school without using their name, but you have a feeling you know who it is. Would you report those comments or not?

Situation 4

A student creates an account with your school's name in the screen name and posts students' photos with comments that everybody hears about. Some of the comments are mean to students; some are compliments. Do you report the mean comments, the whole account, or both?

Situation 5

One night, you notice that a student has made a comment online saying they're going to fight with another student in the lunchroom the next day. Do you report that comment online or not? Do you report it to a teacher or principal the next morning or not? Or both?

Situation 6

You're watching a cartoon video and all of a sudden there's some weird content in it that's definitely not appropriate for kids and makes you feel uncomfortable. Do you report it or not?

Situation 7

You're playing an online game with friends and someone none of the players know starts chatting with you. They're not being mean or anything, but you don't know them. Do you ignore them or report them?