Methodist Church Social Media

the well
THE NETWORK FOR METHODIST
CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKERS

Guidance for young people aged 11-18

Contents

The Methodist Church recognises that the use of the Internet and other forms of social media are an important part of young people's lives, whether for socialising or for sending and receiving information. In accordance with the Methodist Church's Safeguarding Policy, we want to protect you from any harm or risk when using the Internet or other forms of social media. We have also produced some guidance for children, parents and youth workers which can be found on the Methodist Children & Youth website (www.childrenandyouth.org.uk).

This information might initially seem a bit heavy. Don't be put off; please carry on reading! We don't want to spoil your fun; we just want you to have the right information to stay safe. We hope you will find it useful. You will find we make frequent reference to a certain website, www.thinkuknow.co.uk. This site has stacks of helpful information about staying safe, with videos and games to help you think through situations and suggestions of whom to contact if you want to report something. The site is run by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). CEOP is a government law enforcement agency that aims to protect people from abuse.

What follows are some suggested areas for you to **consider**. It might be helpful to discuss these with a friend, youth worker, youth group teacher or parent. We have also bullet pointed some '**Always**' things for your own safety; stuff that we think you should always do.

Social networking sites

Some examples of social networking sites that you might be familiar with or currently using are Facebook, Bebo, Myspace or Twitter. It's great to use these sites but it's important that you think about how you use them and the information you share in order to keep safe whilst still enjoying these sites to the max.

Consider and discuss
- What information do you give out on your profile?
- Remember you don't know who your friends' friends are (or their friends' friends!). You don't know what they would do with your profile picture and/or phone numbers.

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- Information on your profile page can potentially be seen by anyone! So if you would be uncomfortable handing this information out on the street, maybe you shouldn't put it on your profile page. At www.thinkuknow.co.uk there is a short film worth watching called *Consequences*. It's about a young man who found out all sorts about a young woman. Watch to find out how he used this information against her.
- The more anonymous you are the less vulnerable you are to people with bad intentions. How could you make yourself more anonymous?
- Do you ever forget that the Internet is a public space? Do you easily forget this when you're typing away from the comfort of your home? What can you do to remind yourself that this is a public space?
- If someone knows someone you know, does that make them your friend? Should you be chatting to them?
- How would you feel about having a respected and appropriate adult (say a parent, aunt or uncle) as a friend on your site to hold you accountable and flag up to you if they think you are doing anything risky?

Always:

- Always use privacy settings so only approved friends can instantly message you. People can still send you friend requests and message you. But with the right privacy settings, people who you don't want to see your profile can't! If you are unsure how to use privacy settings, ask someone who might know, such as a youth worker.
- Be careful with what info you have on your home page. Never post your phone number or email address. No one needs this info when they can message you privately.
- Avoid posting pictures of you or your friends wearing school uniform. People with bad intentions may look for your school badge and work out what school you go to and track you down.
- Only upload pictures that you would be happy for your mum or dad to see. This thought may stop you from uploading sexy or risqué pictures that could be used against you by unpleasant people or bullies.
- Only chat to people you know in the real world.
- Think before you share personal thoughts such as what you got up to with a girl or boyfriend or relay an argument you had with someone. Always check yourself by asking, "Would I want my mum, dad, teacher, youth worker or a stranger to see what I have posted?" If the answer is NO don't post it!
- Always be careful who you accept into your forums and private chat areas. Unfortunately there are people who have bad intentions and use these sites to make contact with children and young people.
- Always tick the "no picture forwarding" option on your account's settings page. This will stop people forwarding your pictures without your consent.
- When blogging. always be discreet. You can tell people you're going to a party, but don't give details about where and when it is. Real friends can phone you to find out details. A complete stranger doesn't need to know.

Where to go for help

If you or your friends have any concerns about someone acting strangely, or if you're being bullied, contact the administrator of the site or chat area immediately. Failing this, tell a trusted adult. It is important that you act on your concerns and don't be scared to speak up.

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If you think there is a chance that the person wants to abuse you or your friends report this to www.thinkuknow.co.uk or press the CLICK CEOP CEOPS safety button on www.childrenandyouth.org.uk and report it. You can load this button onto your own browser. To find out how, see www.ceop.police.uk/Browser-Safety

Mobiles

Mobile phones are a great way of staying in touch with friends and family and for sharing pictures, music etc with friends. However, in your use of them, consider the following.

Consider and discuss
- Have you or has a friend ever given out your mobile number to someone you didn't know? Did anything bad happen as a result of this? What could have happened?
- Have you ever been harassed by anyone? How did it feel? How did you get it to stop?
- Have you or your friends ever sent pictures that you have later regretted sending? What happened?
- Have you ever posted yours or someone else's mobile number on a networking site such as Facebook or Bebo? Why is this not a good idea?

Always:
- Only give out your number to people you know in the real world; people who don't know you may harass you. For the same reason it is best not to put your number (or anyone else's) onto networking sites.
- It's fun taking pictures of yourself and friends with a camera phone – but be careful whom you share these pictures with.
- Always think about the image and who you are sending it to. Once it's out there, it's there forever! Check out www.thinkuknow.co.uk and watch the short film called *Exposed*. It's about a young woman called Dee and what happened when she sent a photo of herself to her boyfriend.
- If your mobile has Bluetooth, lock it – otherwise anyone in the area can access things like contacts on your phone, and you wouldn't want that to happen! Change your password from the default setting so no one can guess it and access your information and contacts.

Being harassed or bullied?
If you're receiving unwanted or insulting texts, contact your service provider. Also tell an adult – someone you can trust, such as a youth worker, teacher or parent. If you need further help, look in the cyberbullying section of the www.thinkuknow.co.uk website.

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Uploading Videos

This can be fun – but be careful.

- Videos uploaded onto the net could potentially be around for a long time and anyone could see them. This includes teachers and parents, or even your future university or employer! How do you feel about this? Think carefully about the images you are portraying of yourself.
- Films of you and your friends allow people to find out more about you. Think about what you are sharing; is it more than you would normally share? What are the risks to yourself and your friends? Does your film identify you, your school or the place where you live?

'Sexting' (self-taken images)

Taking an indecent image of yourself, and sending it via mobile phone or some other form of technology, is commonly known as 'sexting'.

Consider and discuss
- Have you or a friend ever done sexting or been tempted to do something similar? Be honest even if you think you have just been messing around.
- Under what circumstances could you be tempted to send indecent or risqué images of yourself? Have you ever felt pressurised to take such pictures, maybe sending them to a boyfriend or someone you fancy?
- How could these images be used against you and by whom?
- Who might potentially see these images?
- Do you realise that once you have taken these images and sent them you lose control of them? They could end up anywhere and be seen by family and friends, or even future employers.

The www.thinkuknow.co.uk website has a short video called *Exposed* which is really worth watching (if you haven't already watched when we mentioned it in the 'Mobiles' section). It's about a young woman called Dee who sent a naughty picture of herself to her boyfriend. Find out what happened next...

Always:
- Remember never to send pictures of yourself to others that you wouldn't want passed around your school or put on the school noticeboard.
- If you receive an indecent picture, report it to a responsible adult. Don't pass it on to anyone else.
- Remember: you could be breaking the law if you send indecent pictures of a person under 18.

Check out the 'Sexting and the law' section of the www.thinkuknow.co.uk website for further information regarding the law.

If you need help or advice
- If you want photos online removed, contact the service provider (such as Facebook or YouTube).
- If you are worried or concerned about anything tell a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher or youth worker.

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- If someone is using an image against you report it via www.thinkuknow.co.uk click CEOP button on our website home page www.childrenandyouth.org.uk or call ChildLine on 08001111.
- If you are being cyberbullied you could contact www.cybermentors.org.uk who offer online support.

Chat Rooms & lM (Instant Messaging)

Chat rooms and chat areas on websites are good ways of staying in touch and meeting people. However in order to stay safe there are things you need to consider and be aware of.

Consider and discuss
- Have you ever used a chat room? What was your experience of it?
- Do you feel like you have really got to know people through chat rooms? How do you know if people are telling you the truth about themselves?
- How can you keep yourself safe when using chat rooms?
- Do you know how to block people?
- Do you know how to save conversions in case anything unpleasant happens and you need some evidence?
- At www.thinkuknow.co.uk you can watch a short film about 'Claire', who thought she knew who she was talking to online but discovered otherwise.

Always:
- Remember: it's very easy for people to lie about themselves. If you have been chatting to someone for a while, you may feel you know them – but you don't. You have no way of knowing if someone is telling the truth; even if they show you a picture of themselves it could be someone else. This also applies to webcams or video. Seeing a person in a video doesn't mean it's them.
- Be careful what you share in a chat room. You don't know who else is listening or what they might do with the info. Remember: if you're not comfortable shouting it out in a crowded room, don't write it in a chat room.
- Remember: some adults have bad intentions and may try and get in touch with you. Report anything suspicious. Tell a trusted adult – a parent, aunt, uncle, youth worker or teacher.
- Remember: you can delete a contact if you don't want to talk to them anymore. It's okay to delete people!

Make sure you know how to block instant message contacts. They will not be told you have blocked them so there's no need to feel bad about it. Make sure you know how to save conversations just in case something unpleasant happens and you need evidence.

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Gaming

Online games in which you can chat as you play are good fun. However, there are risks that you need to consider.

Consider and discuss
- Have you ever felt so involved in a game that you feel like you would do anything to win or get to the next level?
- Have you ever given out any personal information (such as your email address or where you go to school) while playing an online game? Why is it not a good idea to give out this sort of information? What might happen? What other sort of personal information shouldn't you share? Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk and play the *Who's your buddy* game. This game should help you to think through some of these things.

Always:
- Take breaks while playing games. It's easy to become addicted. Try and stay realistic; a game isn't real life!
- Adults with bad intentions also use gaming sites and can pretend to be young people. Remember: people aren't necessarily who they say they are.
- Remember not to share your personal details such as
    1. your email address
    2. your photo
    3. your real name
    4. where you go to school.

There are rating systems for games, just like classifications for films. See the gaming rating system on the www.thinkuknow.co.uk website to find out more.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet or mobiles to deliberately upset someone else. It is different from normal bullying due to its 24/7 nature and it can make someone feel threatened all the time, not just at school but at home as well. No one should have to put up with bullying.

Consider and discuss
- Have you or a friend ever been a victim of cyberbullying? If you have, share your story with someone you trust. What happened? How did you get it to stop?
- How could you help someone who is being cyberbullied?
- Standing by and not helping someone who is being bullied is as bad as being the bully.
- If you think someone you know is being bullied, it's your duty to report it. How do you feel about doing this?

The short film *Safer Internet Day* on the www.thinkyouknow.co.uk website might help you think through some of these issues a bit more.

Always:
- If you're being bullied, always seek help. Don't suffer in silence. Save emails and messages as these can be used as proof to stop the bully. Try not to reply to

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horrible messages. At www.thinkuknow.co.uk there is a cyberbullying section which outlines exactly what to do if you are being bullied. Tell a trusted adult what's happening to you.

- If someone you know is being bullied, always report it. Tell a trusted adult about it. Cyberbullying can be scary and very public as loads of people can potentially see the things being said or done.
- Always refuse to forward pictures and insulting messages. To forward these things means you're taking part in the bullying.
- Offer support to someone who is being bullied and tell a trusted adult about it.

If needed, you can get further support and guidance from www.cybermentor.org.uk

This policy works in conjunction with the Methodist Church social media guidelines, which can be downloaded here: www.methodist.org.uk/socialmediaguidelines

Contact Us

Our website: www.childrenandyouth.org.uk
Our email: childrenandyouth@methodistchurch.org.uk
Our www.facebook.com/pages/Methodist-Children-Youth/126895266084

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