

eSmart News – Keeping the Group Chat Healthy

Rikki Waller from *Stay Safe on Social* recently wrote a blog giving advice on how to keep group chats healthy and avoiding those that can become toxic. Whilst group chats have provided much needed connection during lockdowns, they do have the potential for spiralling out of control at a frightening speed. Nasty and bullying behaviour can creep in all too easily because when posts are put up, no one sees the facial expression or body language of the sender or the recipient – children don't see how their messages are received and the impact they have. Likewise recipients can also misinterpret what is sent.

The most commonly used group chat apps are WhatsApp, Snap Chat, Instagram, Discord, Kids Messenger, and Facebook Messenger, all of which allow individual and group communication.

Here are Rikki's recommendations for keeping the chat healthy:

- It is recommended that Primary School-aged children should only use Facebook Messenger for Kids so that parents can control what is going on in any group chats through the parental controls
- Devices should never 'go to sleep' with students. Normalise handing them over to their parents before bedtime or to put them in another room until the next day so they are unable to respond to messages at crazy times of the night and morning
- Help your children to develop the skills to leave a group chat that is not helpful or is harmful in any way. Teach them simple phrases to remove themselves from toxic conversations - 'Sorry guys, I'm not feeling comfortable talking about that' or 'This is getting a bit nasty for me, I'm going to go'.
- Remind students that they must always be kind, respectful and responsible at all times while engaging in a group chat. All it takes is for someone to take a screenshot of cyberbullying, for interactions to become public and be used as evidence against them.

If you have any questions or concerns, I would love to hear from you or [CLICK HERE](#) to let me know your thoughts and/or suggestions for future articles.

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Hi Julie

This is just a snippet of information that is available within the [Safe on Social Schools Toolkit](#).

Along with cheat sheets specifically on Group Chats, you will also have access to self-paced teacher training, student training with complete lesson plans, videos and activities and an entire online Toolkit specially designed for parents so there is consistent messaging at home as well as in school.

Learn more about the [Safe on Social Schools Toolkit](#) by simply replying to this email and requesting more info.

Stay safe,