



Helping your child recover after a bad experience online

From accidentally viewing something upsetting, to relationship breakups turning nasty on social media, it is natural to want to shield your child from any harm online, or offline.

Although there are ways to help your child to stay safer online, there is no guarantee that your child will *never* have a harmful experience online.

A key part of fostering your child's digital resilience is enabling them and supporting them to recover when things go wrong. This can be a difficult time for a parent too, especially if you don't know where to start or are feeling helpless.

Top tips for parents:

Try to understand exactly what your child is upset about

It is important to gain a better understanding of what it is that is upsetting them and get the details of what happened, so that you can help. For example, if your child accidentally came across a disturbing video online, is it the content that upset them or more the feeling of shame or embarrassment from seeing something disturbing?

Make sure that your child feels supported, not punished

Make it clear that whatever happens, however embarrassed or ashamed they may feel, they can count on your support and you will help them through anything. If a child feels punished or as though what happened was their fault, it may increase their fear and shame of what happened. This in turn could make the recovery process more difficult for them.

Banning your child from using the internet may not be the answer

If you forbid them from going online after they have made a mistake, or had a harmful experience, this could have a negative impact on their self-esteem and their resilience. If your child is very young, you could set parental controls and adjust the privacy and security settings on their device. This way they will be able to continue exploring the age-appropriate apps and websites that they enjoy.

Take an interest in what your child enjoys doing online

Having a better understanding of the apps, websites and games your child enjoys, and some of the associated risks, can help you feel more prepared to understand and help your child if something bad should happen online. For example, if you know that they enjoy gaming, you can make sure the sort of games they play are suitable for their age by checking the PEGI rating.

For more information, advice and support visit: www.parentzone.org.uk/recovery