Online safety tips for Parents/Carers

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, children and young people are spending more time online than ever before whether it is for school work, entertainment or to keep in touch with family and friends.

Here are a few tips on how to keep your children safe when they are online:

- **Be Informed** – It is important to keep up-to-date with online trends and challenges that children and young people face online.

- **Communication is key** – It is important to talk to your children about what they are doing online and the risks they may face. This will in turn encourage your children and adolescents to talk to you about any difficulties they may encounter.

- **Explore the internet** – What better way to obtain an understanding of the apps and websites your children and young people are using than by using them together. This way you will become more aware of the risks they may encounter online.

- **Support your children to create an online/offline balance** – Since children and young people are spending more and more time online, it is even harder for them to create a balance. Encourage more offline activities which include amongst others physical activities, board games and family activities.

- **Encourage your children to stick to a routine** – Drawing up a timetable together with the children and young people will help to manage their time better. Screen breaks should also be factored in.

- **Promote Respect** – Children and young people are to be encouraged to respect themselves and others even when they are online. Make your children aware of the consequences their actions online may have.

- **Make sure that your children have access to age-appropriate content** – Since children and young people have more time on their hands, they may try to play games or download apps which are not age-appropriate. The age rating is there for a reason, talk to them about this and explain why they should stick to games and apps that are appropriate for them. Do not give in to pressure even in these difficult situations.

- **Beat the boredom** – Children and young people may explore new things online due to boredom, including communicating with people they do not know. Talk to your children about the risks they may encounter and encourage them to engage in other activities.

- **Seek advice** – If you are in doubt about any issues related to online safety contact the helpline 179 for guidance and support. For other issues relating to the wellbeing of your children, there are various support services which may be found on **https://teleskola.mt/studentsupport/**

- **Report abuse** – Should you or your child encounter abuse online such as cyber-bullying, grooming and sexting, report it! You can either report the abuse directly through the website/application itself or through the report abuse button on **www.besmartonline.org.mt**

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