

# ALEXINNA

## SAFEGUARDING STEPS TO NAVIGATE THE ONLINE WORLD OF SOCIAL MEDIA



**Title: Safeguarding Steps To Navigate The Online World of Social Media**

**Written by Sherna Alexander Benjamin**





Technology mindfulness is more than knowing how to use technology or being aware of its impact. It is also about consciously and intentionally establishing healthy practices to use technology in ways that enhance your life and that of others and foster a culture of protection and safety while practising discipline, being present, embracing self-care and respect, and seeking knowledge to inform one's understanding and use of technology including taking ownership of online behaviours and their consequences (healthy or unhealthy).

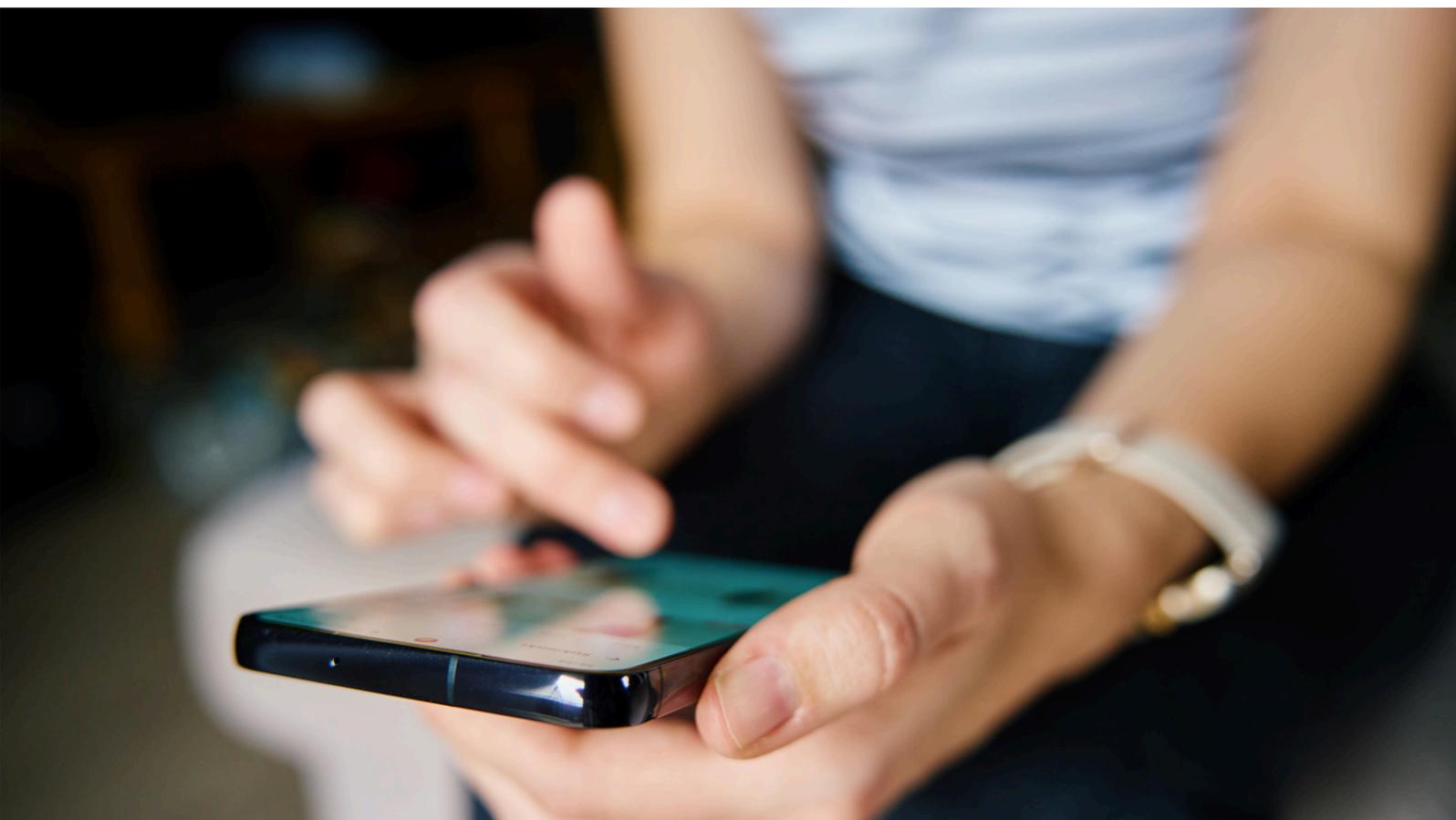
*Sherina Alexander Benjamin*

# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Two Faces of Social Media</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Linkages Between Extended Online Exposure and Mental Health and Social Challenges.</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>Think Briefly About</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>Child Safety Online</u></a>	16
<a href="#"><u>Algorithms and Addictive Online Experiences</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Big Tech Leaders</u></a>	23
<a href="#"><u>Shared Responsibilities: Safety Online</u></a>	26
<a href="#"><u>Steps You Can Take: Individuals and Families</u></a>	28

# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Safeguarding Steps Parents Can Take to Protect Their Children Online</u></a>	38
<a href="#"><u>It is Never too late to Take Action</u></a>	44
<a href="#"><u>Action Steps</u></a>	46
<a href="#"><u>About the Author</u></a>	48
<a href="#"><u>Resources</u></a>	51





## Two Faces of Social Media

The emergence of the internet and social media platforms has provided many benefits for users, from instant access to information to connectivity with friends, family members, and colleagues and, in some cases, increasing well-being.



*“The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had.”*

— Eric Schmidt, Google CEO and Alphabet executive chairman (at the Internet World Trade Show, New York, 18 November 1999)

At the same time, there are adverse effects to its use, which can significantly impact mental health, social relationships, focus, and ability to critically and objectively reason. Although the benefits can help us all advance in ways we never imagined, we cannot overlook the adverse impacts of extended exposure to screens, the Internet, and social media platforms on our lives and those around us.

Various intersecting social, health, and economic issues have evolved due to the existence of social media platforms and the Internet. While these continue to drive dynamic social and economic change at an accelerated pace at all levels of society, which has some benefits for society, they also provide opportunities for exploring ways in which the use of social media platforms can support research areas related to social work, business, human behavior, well-being, and addiction.

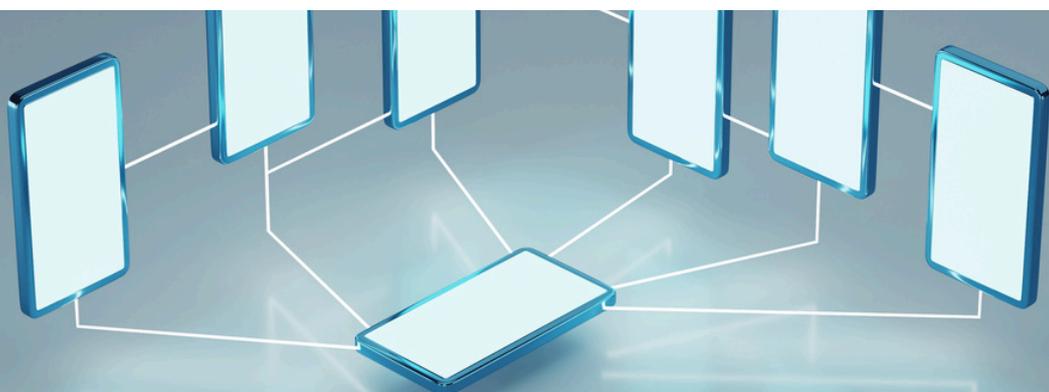
Additionally, using social media platforms and the Internet can amplify how leaders manifest their authority and power. Corporate online presence on organizational culture, civility, customer engagement, and ways to address, respond, and prevent interpersonal violence online and offline.



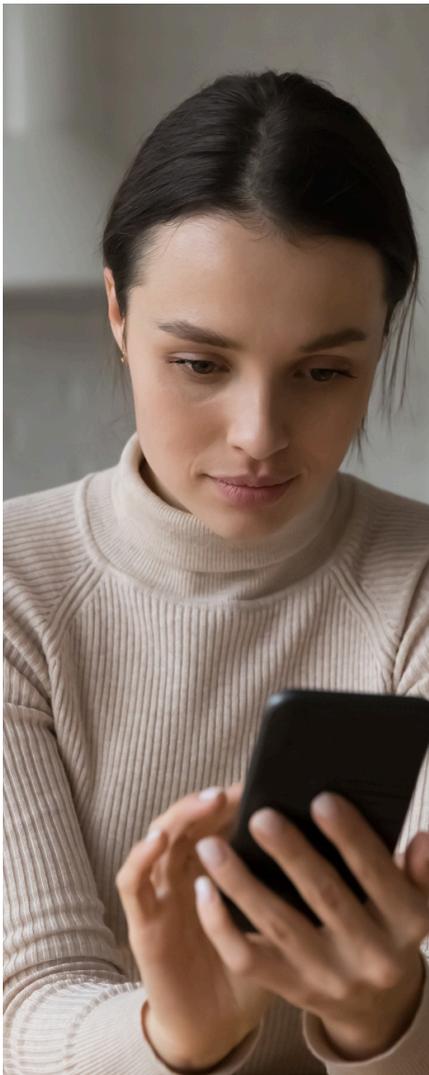
The influence of social media platforms and the Internet can be captivating, promoting social networking, human curiosity, and innovation while fostering social and economic advancement. At the same time, they are changing how people interact, see the world, work, and build relationships, and they are integral parts of our realities and daily lives. They can facilitate an environment of immense harm and addiction that is disruptive and adversely affects the health and well-being of many while fostering a community for free expression, healing, advocacy, and socio-economic change and transformation.

The Internet can be a dark place that facilitates an insecure online experience for many; thus, learning to stay safe online should form part of the ecosystem of every individual, family, and community.

This publication explores some of the steps individuals, parents, and guardians can take to respond to prolonged use of social media and, protect their children and themselves online, reduce extended exposure to the Internet and social media platforms, which can affect healthy relationships, mental health, and place children, teenagers, and many adults at a higher risk of harm online that can transcend offline.







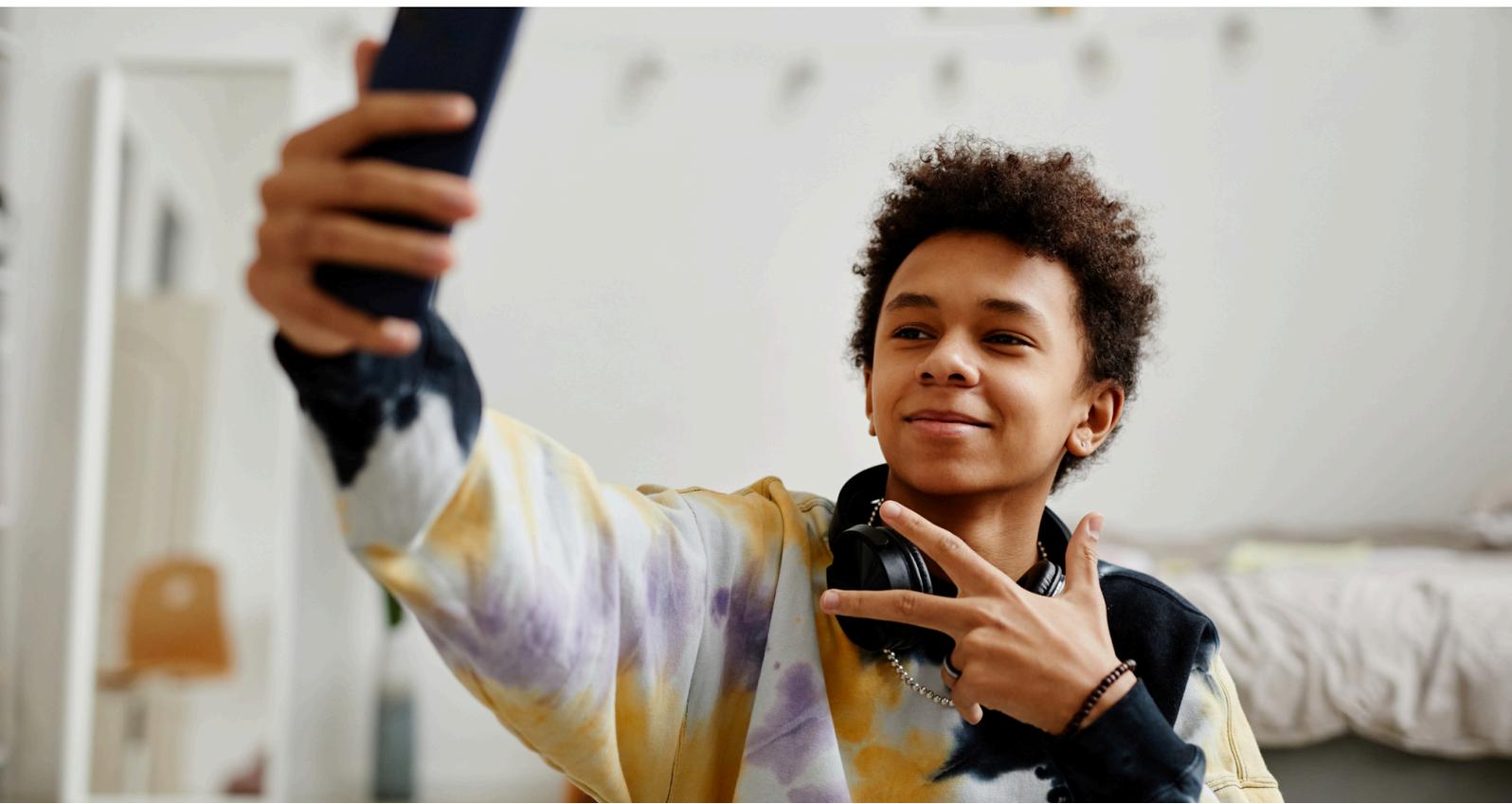
## Linkages Between Extended Online Exposure and Mental Health and Social Challenges

Now more than ever, it is essential that we protect our children, teenagers, young adults, and ourselves from extended online exposure and reduce and prevent the harms that are manifested through these spaces. Multiple studies have shown clear linkages between online exposure, significantly through social media, that negatively impact individuals' mental health and well-being.

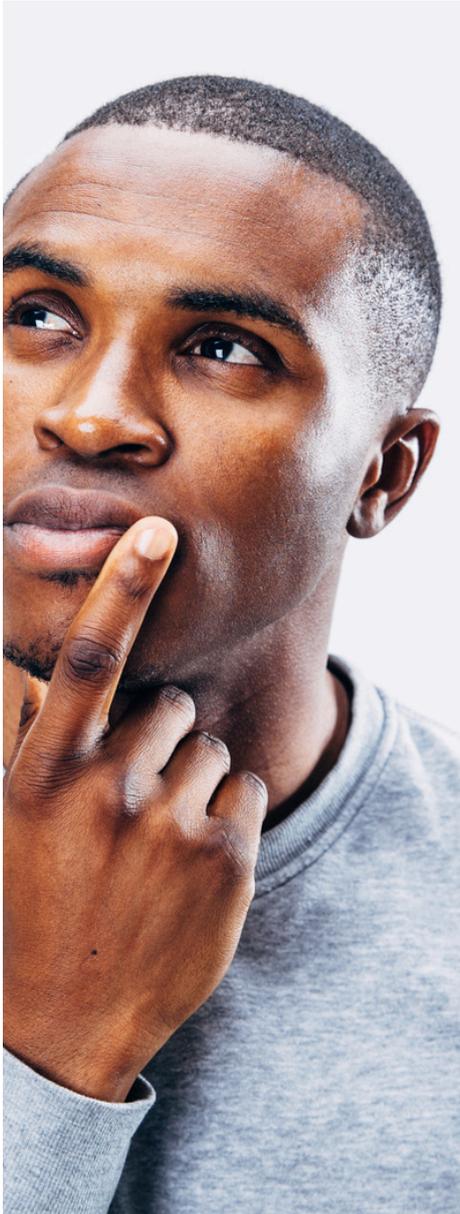
Many studies have demonstrated strong connections between online networking and mental health that affect the daily functioning of individuals. A [University of California Davis Health](#) article explores mental health impacts, including ways the use of photo filters can provide amusement and, at the same time, create false illusions about physical appearance. The influence and extended exposure to the Internet and social networking platforms can often result in various emotional, psychological, social, and health issues, even affecting our financial health.

Online exposure can include challenges such as but are not limited to sleep deprivation, increased anxiety, depression, [social comparisons](#), increased suicidal ideations, exposure to unhealthy content, [online sexual grooming](#) that can lead to in-person interactions and offline violence, [addictive behaviors](#), changes in relationships, irrational and unrealistic thinking about others and self.

While children, teenagers, and young adults' ability to think and focus can be heavily influenced by their environment, the degree of their exposure to the Internet and social media platforms can add another complex layer to their experiences that facilitate increased exposure to harm, violence, and abuse. How we educate ourselves and children on using smart devices and the Internet matters more profoundly as it's linked to their safety and the preservation of life. The environments in which children are born, grow, learn, and live are critical to their development and decision-making.





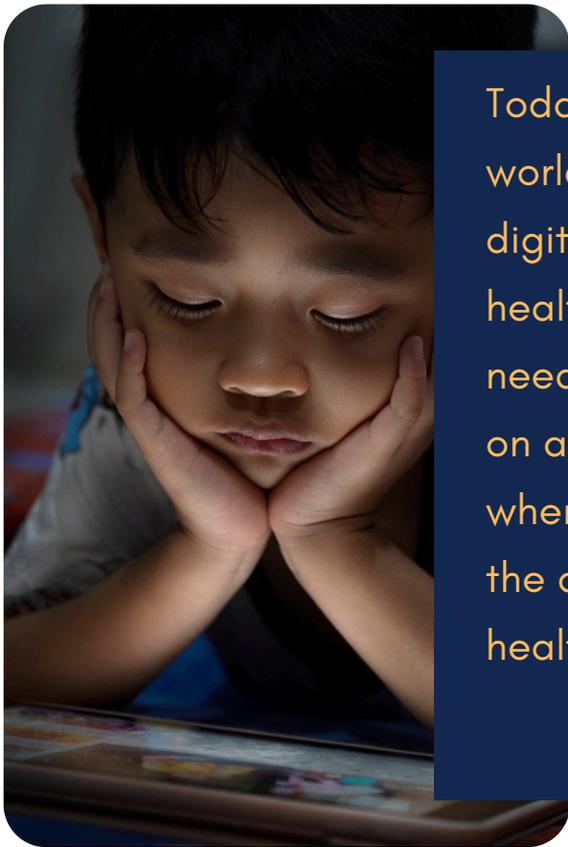


## Think Briefly About

1. How can prolonged exposure to online platforms affect in-person social relationships and alter neurological pathways for children and adults?
2. How can extended exposure to various social media platforms affect knowledge of self and all dimensions of health, including spiritual health and growth, and how can such exposure impair a person's ability to express themselves and their emotions in a consciously healthy and intelligent manner?

“The Internet is like life in general– it harbours opportunities and dangers. – *Attributed to Elza Dunkels, Swedish scientist (in Youth Culture and Net Culture: Online Social Practices: Online Social Practices)*





Today's children and teens do not know a world without digital technology, but the digital world wasn't built with children's healthy mental development in mind. We need an approach to help children both on and offline that meets each child where they are while also working to make the digital spaces they inhabit safer and healthier.

**Sandy Chung, MD, FAAP, President,  
American Academy of Pediatrics**

## Child Safety Online

Children, teenagers, and young adults can be exposed to various types of healing behaviors on the Internet as it can foster an environment of shared identity and community. At the same time, they can experience harmful behaviors, including but not limited to sexual abuse and negative stereotypes. Young girls who spend hours on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok may begin to develop a skewed concept about their body image and self-identity.

Many may experience the sexualization of their bodies as they are exposed to individuals on the Internet, who may lure them into showing more of their bodies, request explicit photos, and chat provocatively, thus facilitating a type of skewed rewarding experience.

But more so, preying on their victim's vulnerabilities, lack of life experience and knowledge about the real world and human behavior, and predators can engage in opportunistic and predatory behaviors related to natural teenage body development and hormonal changes and the confusing thoughts and desires that occur during adolescence. Predators can also capitalize on young adults' acts of defiance of authority as they navigate developmental changes, especially if they were born and grew up in environments with high-risk factors.

Parents should be aware of the platforms their children use and understand how to use the security features on these platforms, as [predators trying to connect with young teens using online platforms](#) expose children to potential harm.

"According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, 500,000 predators are scrolling through social media platforms, gaming apps and chat rooms, trying to connect with kids. Their targets? Mostly age 15 and younger."



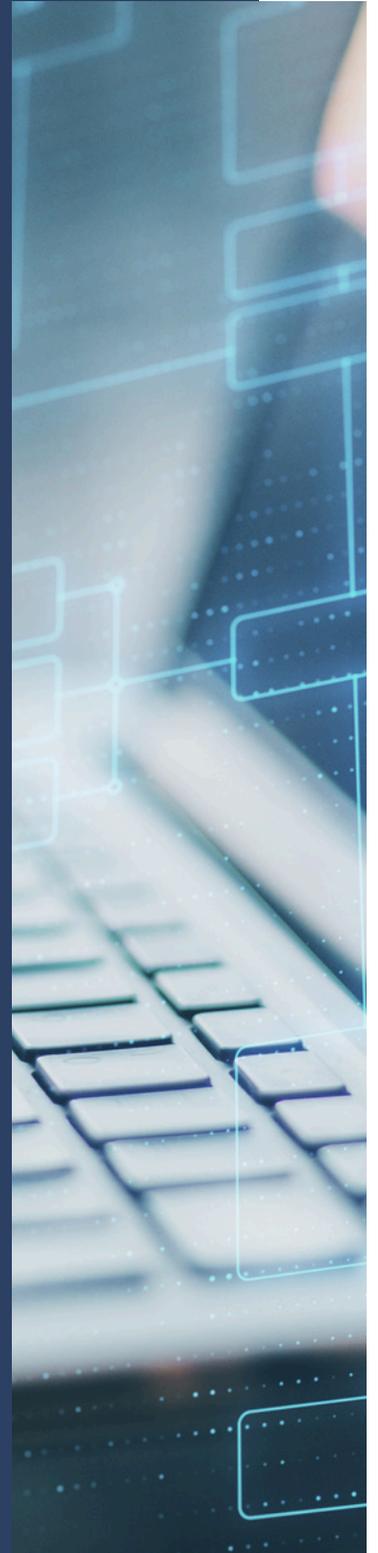
The FBI continues to work vigorously to address and respond to [sextortion](#) as it has noticed an increase in cases. The FBI states, "The people who commit this crime have studied how to reach and target children and teens. One person the FBI put in prison for this crime was a man in his 40s who worked as a youth minister so he could learn how teens talked to each other. Then, he created social media profiles where he pretended to be a teenage girl. This "girl" would start talking to boys online and encourage them to make videos. Another person offered money and new smartphones to his victims. In one case, the criminal threatened a girl, saying he would hurt her and bomb her school, if she didn't send pictures."

Other predators may offer teenagers money and clothing or purchase their favorite meal (mainly if the child speaks about the social and financial challenges in the home where they live) in exchange for a video, picture, or meet-up. Predators study their potential victims and utilize the information gained to lure unsuspecting young girls and boys who believe they are communicating with someone their age into their trap. There are instances where the predator may reveal their age. At the same time, they would use psychological tactics to build trust and subtly work to request that the teenager perform certain acts online and eventually meet offline.

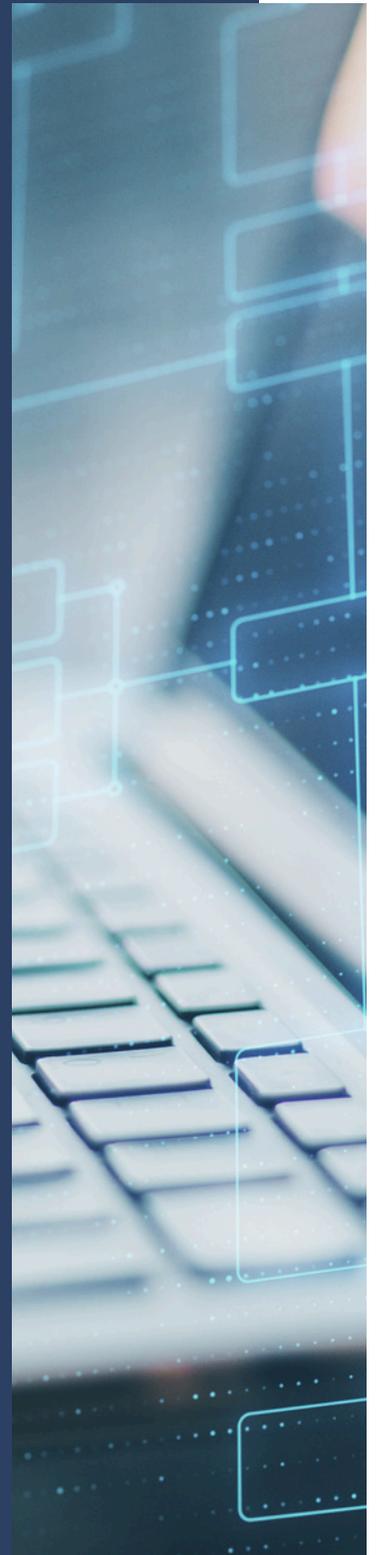


## Algorithms and Addictive Online Experiences

Algorithms play a considerable role in fostering an addictive online experience. "Research studies have revealed that social media addiction can be stronger than addiction to cigarettes" (Ballas, 2017 & Thier, 2012 in [Bader et al., 2024](#)). In their study of social media addiction algorithms, Bader et al. (2024) stated, "Social media addiction algorithms are based on a human brain [behaviour] called the habit loop, where the brain motivates and engages in [behaviour] to obtain the reward or to get the necessity." The constant exposure to online platforms, social media, and algorithms can become addictive, shaping mental pathways in a particular direction based on a routine that turns into a habit and becomes out of control—making it difficult for the user to reason objectively and make healthy life choices.



Extended exposure to social media platforms can increase an individual's level of dopamine, contributing to addictive behaviors, and the person may require psychological care and support as they are in a similar position as someone who is addicted to prescribed or non-prescription drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol. Unfortunately, most individuals in this addictive state may have to experience a crash-and-burn incident to understand the negative impact of their behaviors and the consequences as a result. Sadly, such incidents come with life-altering outcomes. Attempting to reason with someone addicted to social media and, most profoundly, with the people they are connecting with may be highly challenging and emotionally exhausting, contributing to social, health, and financial issues within the home.







“...MY KIDS LIVE IN SINGAPORE. IN SINGAPORE WE DO NOT HAVE THE UNDER 13 EXPERIENCE...” - [TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew](#)

## Big Tech Leaders

During a hearing in January 2024, where Tech executives from platforms like Meta, TikTok, X, Snapchat, and others were questioned by members of the Senate Judiciary Committee on children's safety on their platforms, [Mark Zuckerberg](#) [apologized](#) to parents whose children fell victim to various harmful and nefarious online activities that impacted their mental health while using his social media platforms. Many of the children experienced cyberbullying and other life-altering effects, including death.

At the same time, he used the platform to speak about the security measures his company is taking to facilitate a safe online experience for all its users. Online safety in today's world is a shared responsibility. However, tech company officials have a more significant commitment to protect their users by implementing human-centric security measures versus focusing primarily on engaging in strategic predatory behaviors driven by power, profit, and monopolization.

During a 2023 [congressional hearing](#), the CEO of TikTok, Shou Zi Chew, talked about the protection that his children experience from living in Singapore due to a law that protects minors. In essence, he does not have to worry about them being exposed to the harms of social media at an early age as a national law protects them and restricts their use and exposure to social media platforms. At the same time, he placed responsibility on parents and families to talk to their children about social media use and identify ways they need to set guidelines.

His response can send a strong message to governments, indirectly telling them to get their act together and implement better laws to protect the children in their nation while saying to parents, take ownership, guide your children on healthy and intelligent ways to use their devices, and talk about the benefits and dangers of online exposure and at the same time, saying to tech companies that they must uphold laws and follow the regulations set out by governing bodies to protect all users while providing access to platforms without bias and implementing additional internal policies and platform security to protect its users and their companies.

Many prominent tech leaders understand the damage that extended exposure to the Internet and these platforms can have on children and adults, impacting mental health, critical thinking, focus, concentration, and social relationships.

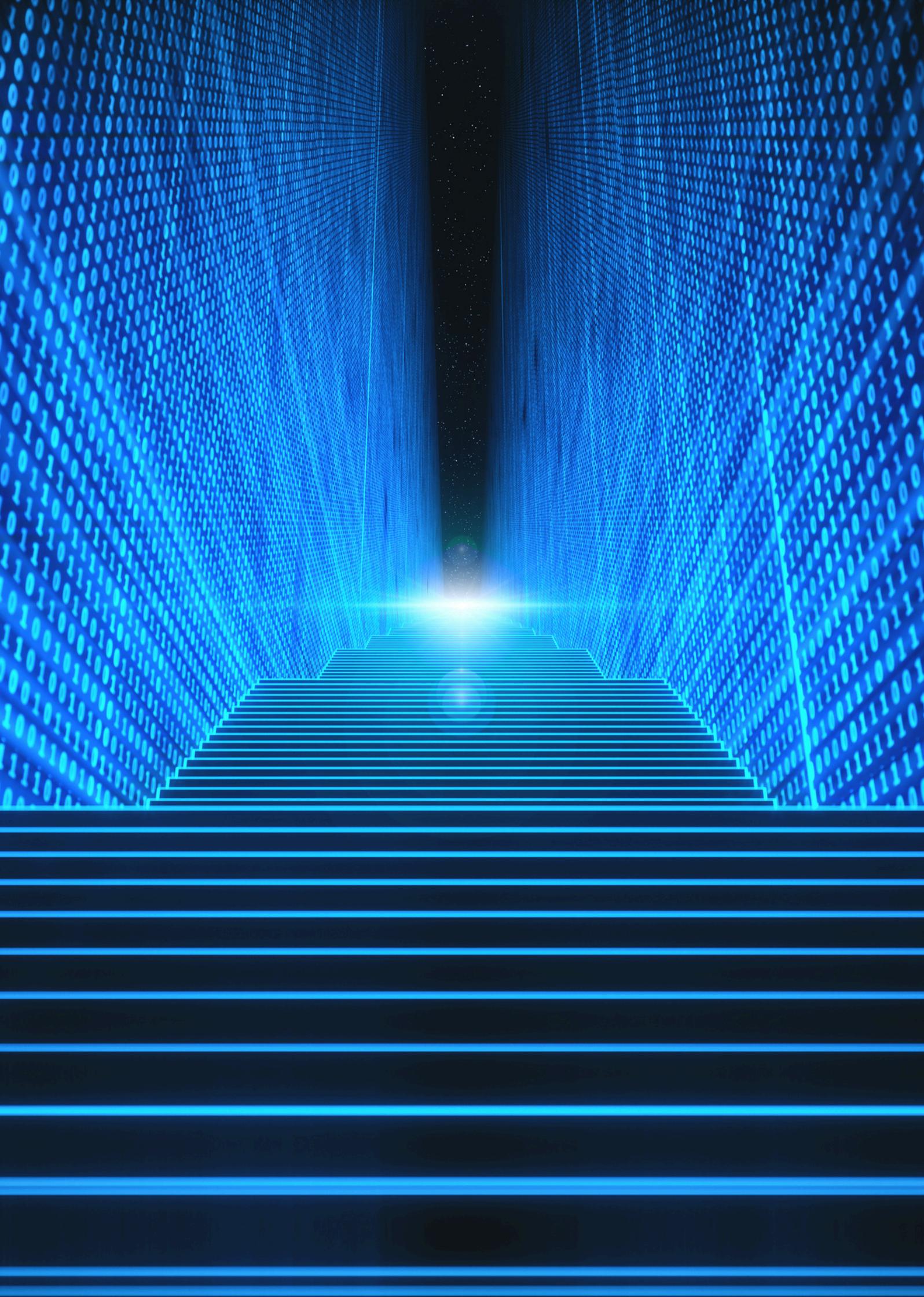


## Shared Responsibilities: Safety Online

Understanding the impact of extended exposure to social media platforms can reduce harm and prevent adverse experiences that can disrupt families, affect mental and physical health, contribute to debt, and forever change lives.

Knowing how to keep children and adults safe online can foster better online experiences, hold tech companies accountable, engage in shared responsibility for safety, and establish a culture of transparency where human-centric decisions and systems place people at the center of technology in the wake of Industry 5.0.





## Steps You Can Take

Here are some steps to reduce exposure to the Internet and social media platforms to support you in being proactive about protecting children, teenagers, young adults, and yourself online.

These suggestions are not exhaustive. They act as guides that can support you in exploring ways to enhance your online safety and the security of your family. They can be included in your online safety (personal and family) toolkit:

### Individuals and Families:

- 1.** Have a conscious conversation about what healthy Internet and social media use means and looks like for you.
- 2.** Have a conversation about social media use with family members individually and collectively.
- 3.** Set boundaries and time limits for using devices to limit exposure to the internet and social media platforms.





## Steps You Can Take:

4. Document your social media use to visualize how long you spend on these platforms and what you do.
5. Have someone hold you accountable if you have difficulty following your established time limits.
6. Turn off your phone while driving and ask others who travel with you (especially with a partner or child to reduce their use to limit distractions). Do this if you cannot control your impulses.
7. Avoid sleeping with your device or spending time on your device before bed.
8. Unfollow social media friends, pages, and influencers who trigger unhealthy feelings and habits.





## Steps You Can Take:

9. Understand that social media platforms are tools, and you can discipline yourself to control the tools. How you use them can either improve your life or contribute to a decline.
10. Understand the alluring influence of social media platforms and establish safeguards to protect yourself.
11. Use a traditional alarm clock.
12. Place your smart devices in a drawer in your bedroom or another room. Reducing the urge to use your devices at night helps build a healthy relationship with digital tools.



DEVICE

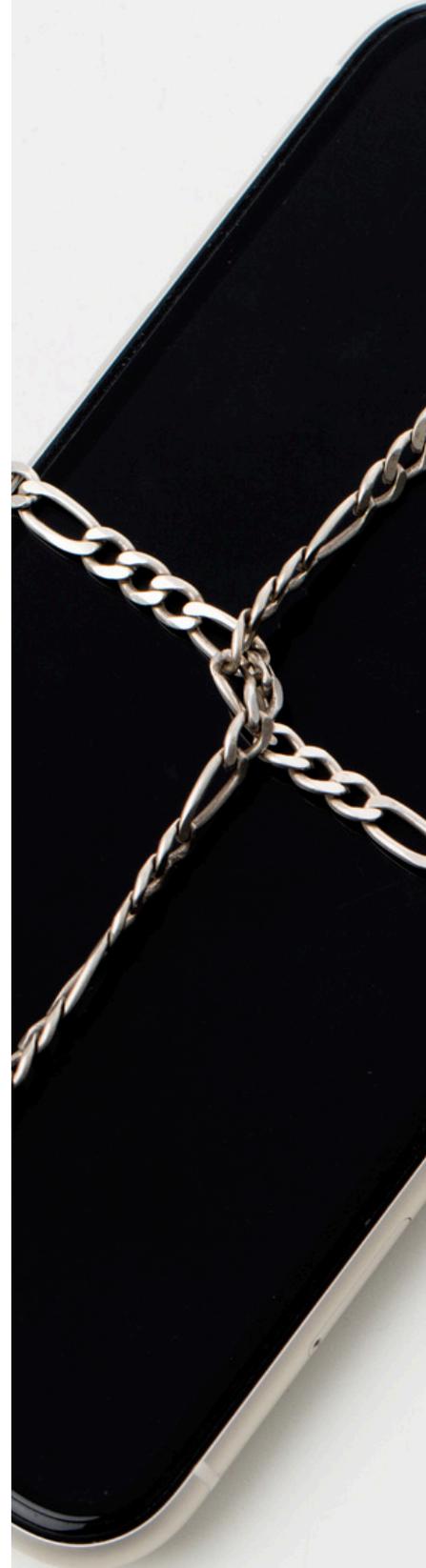
FREE

ZONE



## Steps You Can Take:

- 13.** Take a social media assessment to see if you have addictive behaviors. [The Center for Internet and Technology Addiction](#) has five different tests a person can take to assess if they have any digital and behavioral addictions. You can also search online for other assessments, as this is just one of many.
- 14.** Practice reading a book or getting involved in healthy social activities to reduce cravings and addictive behaviors.
- 15.** Take a digital detox or fast. Staying away from social media platforms for a specific period, you can start with half a day and increase the time.





## Steps You Can Take:

- 16.** Get involved in advocacy for the prevention of online violence and the development of laws and policies for the safeguarding of children and adults to have nonviolent online experiences.
  
- 17.** Report incidents and hold tech companies to a high standard for protecting their users.





# Safeguarding Steps Parents Can Take to Protect Their Children Online.

Parents have a solemn duty and responsibility to protect, care, and provide for their children. Not understanding how to navigate the security features on devices and social media platforms is not an excuse for not protecting children online and taking for granted that online is a safe space. At the same time, parents and guardians should avoid implementing draconian measures that may contribute to heightening children's curiosity and curiosity to explore.

Building a healthy relationship of trust through conscious communication with children is critical to raising awareness about the benefits and disadvantages of social media, understanding the consequences of choices and decisions, and implementing healthy practices for its use.

While there is no surefire way to protect children from the dangers lurking on the internet and social media platforms, there are various safeguarding strategies parents and guardians can implement to protect their children and reduce exposure to harm.



Talk with your children about the benefits and dangers of social media platforms and the Internet.



Remember, tough love is love, and while it may be difficult for a parent or guardian to manifest against their child. Some parents may need to display it at some point in the child-to-parent relationship, such as grounding a child by restricting the use of a device or canceling their participation in a specific event and sticking to the decision even if the parent experiences parental guilt. Tough love is not abuse; it is an act of conscious parenting that includes active listening, discussion of consequences, and respect.



Be aware of the subtle manipulation practices of children as they study their parents and guardians, and know how to use various tactics to get them to reverse a decision. They may not engage in manipulative practices out of an intent to harm but to get their own way or meet their need. At the same time, the absence of ill intent does not mean the absence of life-altering consequences. Parental guidance is key here.



Avoid being too hard on yourself while you work to protect your child and reduce their exposure to harm and the adverse long-term effects that may result from their decisions and choices.



Work with your child to set time limits and boundaries related to device use.



Monitor children's devices and social media usage.



Check their accounts, as predators can create accounts pretending to be a person their age and befriend them.



Screen children's phones to ensure they are not using "**decoy apps**" or "**vault apps**." On the surface, a decoy app is a specific type of Valut app that may look and function like the actual app, for example, a note or calculator app. However, it is a gateway to the actual app, which stores concealed information.

A "**vault app**" is an app that is used as a digital safe where teenagers or adults can store hidden apps and information related to messages, chats, photos, or videos. Children can use these to hide explicit content, chat exchanges, and other sensitive data.

[Bitdefender](#) says, "These apps often function as photo and video vaults, requiring a password or PIN for access and are typically free with in-app purchases. Teens may use these apps, like the Secret Calculator App, to hide private content."

Parents can read the article on Bitdefender to understand how to spot decoy or vault apps, as the use of these apps can expose children to higher risks that may contribute to physical harm, even the loss of their lives. Here is another article from [McAfee](#) about kids' use of secret apps. Another resource article by [WISPY](#) also provides information about decoy apps, and [Chad Barker from AT&T](#), in an interview with WSAZ News Channel 3, spoke about decoy apps and how to spot them.



Check if a child has their mobile apps all password protected. Concealing apps can be a red flag. Parents should curiously explore what is happening, engage in a dialogue with the child, and review if the content and chat exchanges require any action. Not all password-protected apps mean there is a cause for concern. Ensure access to PINS for phones and apps.



Avoid hiding the child's harmful behaviors, as the lack of early intervention can result in adverse long-term effects. Strategically seek the support of family, friends, and professionals. The longer you wait, the more difficult it can be to change the behavior.



Seek mental health care and support to identify the type and level of addiction and begin counseling and therapy. Teenagers may sometimes be referred to a psychiatrist for further evaluation. They may be placed on medication, especially in the case of a dual diagnosis (the presence of more than one mental health diagnosis alongside an addiction).



Have a supportive base and talk with other adults in the home about reaching a consensus about appropriate decisions regarding your child's safety on and offline. All the adults must speak the same language to reduce any opportunity for the child to pit adults against each other to have their way.



## **It is Never too late to Take Action**

The Internet and social media platforms are here to stay, and their advances will continue to influence and shape minds, institutions, communities, and how families interact. They are evolving much faster than we can all imagine. While it is a daunting human task to be ahead of accelerated technological advancements, we can all proactively identify practical ways and steps to implement and foster a culture of protection for ourselves, our children, families, colleagues, and friends.

Unhealthy exposure to online activities can cause harm and transfer offline, disrupting lives, health, and well-being.

Parents must take time to guide their children in healthy online practices and safe ways to use their smart devices, the Internet, and social media platforms. Benjamin Franklin said, "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure."

Even if you have never had a conversation with your child or self about safety online, it's never too late to start. If you or your child may have been the victim of some abuse due to online connections that resulted in offline interactions that went awry, there are steps you can take.

---

- Report any incident to law enforcement; they must document the report and request documentation as proof of report.
- Seek urgent medical attention if you experience any physical or sexual assault. Medical care can diagnose any unseen physical injuries, test for STIs and STDs, and prescribe treatment.
- Seek counselling to address trauma as a result of the incident and receive mental health support.
- Talk to a trusted person. Keeping silent may open the door where you experience future harm as the perpetrator(s) may engage in sextortion, forcing you to comply with their demands.
- Stop engaging with the perpetrator online.
- Remove any decoy apps immediately.
- Check if the perpetrator installed spy or monitoring software on your device.
- Learn how to make healthy decisions and choices regarding your online use.



“ A few years ago, users of Internet services began to realize that when an online service is free, you're not the customer. You're the product.

~ Tim Cook, Apple CEO (in an open letter to Apple customers detailing the company's privacy policy, 17 September 2014)

## Action Steps

Internet safety should be an integral part of our lives; individuals and families should take steps to ensure online safety. You can take many steps to promote a safe online experience, raise awareness, and protect yourself and your loved ones.

- Read and share this publication.
- Having regular conversations with family members about online safety.
- Educating others by sharing best practices.
- Encouraging your employers to facilitate in-house and online training.
- Advocating for legislative and policy changes related to online safety is key to online protection.
- Advocating for online safety to be part of educational curricula is also integral in changing the online landscape and providing students of all ages with the information to make informed decisions.
- Sharing free courses related to information technology provided by public and private agencies.

Technology is advancing faster than we can think. The Internet of Things (IoT) is now part of our lives, and passivity or illiteracy is not an option.





# About the Author



## Education and Certifications:

- Currently advancing expertise through graduate studies at Boston College, U.S.A., with a concentration in Global Practice.
- M.B.A., Huntington University, U.S.A.
- BSW, Huntington University, U.S.A.
- Diploma in Development Leadership, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada.
- Project Management Leadership Certification, Inter-American Development Bank.
- Certifications in Finance and Lean Six Sigma.
- Certifications in Climate Change, Conflict Transformation, Cybersecurity, Diplomacy, Gender, Governance and Democracy, Leadership, Peace, Policy Analysis, and Project Management Associate.

Sherna Alexander Benjamin is a distinguished Policy, Organizational, and International Development (POID) Practitioner with over fourteen years of transformative leadership experience. Her work spans the intersections of social sustainability, policy development, social work, business, interpersonal violence prevention, and development. She has harnessed her personal journey and professional expertise in every endeavor to co-create innovative solutions that foster positive change.

Alexander Benjamin brings an authentically grounded, transformative, and human-centric perspective to her work, making her contributions uniquely valuable and deeply impactful. She also employs interdisciplinary, social-ecological, and intersectional approaches to co-create solutions to complex societal challenges. Her unwavering optimism and formal commitment to advancing economic and social progress are evident in every initiative she undertakes.

Her global influence is reflected in prestigious accolades like The National Medal for Development of Women Silver from the President of Trinidad and Tobago, a U.S. President Gold Volunteer Award, and recognition from legislative bodies in New Jersey. In addition to serving in key advisory and leadership roles on international committees and initiatives, she is a published author and an active contributor to transformative discussions on social innovation and community engagement.

Grounded in her spiritual connection with God and supported by family, mentors, and peers, Sherna Alexander Benjamin epitomizes a new generation of regenerative leadership—combining professional excellence with empathy to co-construct better societies, one community at a time for the greater good.



Despite continued security problems, the IoT will spread, and people will become increasingly dependent on it. The cost of breaches will be viewed like the toll taken by car crashes, which have not persuaded very many people not to drive."

~ Richard Adler, Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for the Future

## Connect With Us

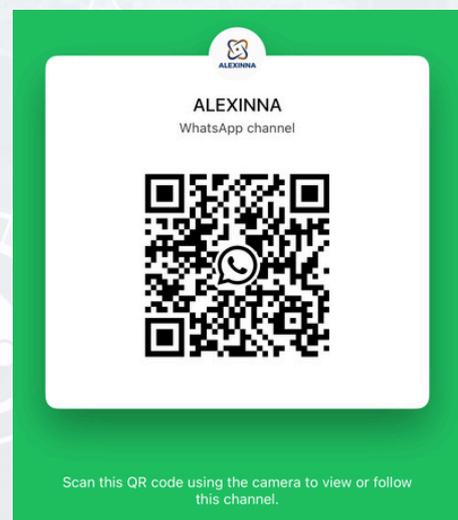


E-mail: [alexinna2399@gmail.com](mailto:alexinna2399@gmail.com)



[WhatsApp Channel](#)

*Online Safety is a  
Collective Effort.*





# Resources

## Online Safety and Security Checklist

### Account & Password Security:

- Use unique, strong passwords for each online account.
- Consider using a password manager to store and generate complex passwords.
- Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) wherever possible.

### Software & Device Protection:

- Regularly update your operating system, apps, and antivirus software.
- Install reputable antivirus and anti-malware software on all devices.
- Familiarize yourself with your device's security settings and adjust them for enhanced protection.

### Privacy Settings:

- Review and update privacy settings on all social media platforms and apps.
- Limit the amount of personal information shared online (e.g., location, contact details).
- Regularly audit app permissions and remove any that are unnecessary.

### Safe Browsing Practices:

- Use secure, trusted websites—look for “https://” in the URL.
- Be cautious when clicking on links, especially from unknown sources.
- Educate yourself about common online scams, phishing attempts, and malware threats.

# Resources

## Online Safety and Security Checklist

### Data Backup:

- Regularly back up important files to a secure cloud service or external hard drive.
- Consider encrypting sensitive data for added protection.

### Family-Wide Digital Security:

- Ensure that every family member has updated antivirus and security software on their devices.
- Use parental controls to manage what younger users can access.
- Set up family accounts where possible to monitor shared device usage and safety settings.

### Education and Open Communication:

- Hold regular discussions about online safety, including recognizing scams and dealing with cyberbullying.
- Encourage children and teens to speak up about any uncomfortable online interactions.
- Teach all family members about the importance of maintaining privacy online.

### Device and App Management:

- Establish a regular schedule to review and update device settings and app permissions.
- Use content filters on browsers and devices to protect younger users from inappropriate content.
- Keep an inventory of devices and installed applications for better management.

# Resources

## Digital Wellbeing and Reducing Extended Exposure Checklist

### Set Boundaries:

- a. Define specific times for checking social media and emails—avoid continuous monitoring.
- b. Establish a “digital curfew” (e.g., no screens 1–2 hours before bedtime).

### Mindful Usage:

- a. Track your screen time with built-in tools or apps to become aware of your usage patterns.
- b. Practice mindful browsing by periodically pausing and reflecting on your online habits.

### Digital Detox:

- a. Schedule regular digital detoxes—set aside periods (a few hours to full days) without screens.
- b. Designate “tech-free” zones in your home, such as the dining room or bedroom.

### Alternative Activities:

- a. Cultivate hobbies and activities that do not involve screens (reading, exercising, crafting, etc.).
- b. Prioritize face-to-face interactions with friends and family.

### Self-Care Practices:

- a. Incorporate mindfulness, meditation, or physical activity into your routine to manage digital stress.
- b. Monitor how online interactions affect your mood and mental health; consider professional help if needed.

# Resources

## **Family Digital Usage Rules:**

- a. Create a family media plan that outlines acceptable screen times and digital activities.
- b. Set up device-free zones or times, such as during meals or one hour before bedtime.

## **Encourage Offline Activities:**

- a. Plan regular family activities that do not involve screens (board games, outdoor sports, nature walks).
- b. Organize “tech-free” family days or evenings to promote bonding and conversation.

## **Lead by Example:**

- a. Parents and caregivers should model healthy digital habits (e.g., limiting personal screen time).
- b. Encourage discussions about how social media can impact wellbeing and strategies for balance.

## **Digital Education for Kids:**

- a. Educate children on the difference between online interactions and real-life relationships.
- b. Help them set personal boundaries for social media use, and discuss the impact of too much screen time on sleep, attention, and physical health.

## **Monitoring and Adjustment:**

- Regularly review and adjust the family media plan as children grow and technology evolves.
- Use tools and apps designed for family screen-time monitoring, and involve the whole family in these reviews.

# Resources

## **Stay Informed:**

1. Keep up with current digital security trends and evolving online threats.
2. Follow trusted sources for advice on digital wellbeing and online safety.

## **Be Flexible:**

1. Regularly revisit and update your checklist as new challenges and technologies emerge.
2. Personalize your strategies based on your unique lifestyle, needs, and family dynamics.

# Resources

## Videos:

[What happened when 4 teens swapped their smartphones for flip phones](#)

[These NYC teens are rejecting cellphones and social media. Here's why.](#)

[Amanda's Story - Internet Safety Video](#)

[Will Australia's social media ban for under-16s work? - The Global Story podcast, BBC World Service](#)

[Internet Safety Month: Cyberbullying signs](#)

[3 online safety tips that might surprise you](#)

[How can you stay safe online? - BBC What's New](#)

[Why scrolling on social media is addictive](#)

[The Ugly Truth About Social Media - Neuroscientist Andrew Huberman](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION | Leslie Coutterand | TEDxMarin](#)

[Is Social Media Hurting Your Mental Health? | Bailey Parnell | TEDxRyersonU](#)

[Social media addiction - how it changes your brain | Luke Burgis | Big Think](#)

[This Is How Social Media Is Destroying Your Life - The Fake Reality](#)

[Social media isn't bad: you're just using it wrong | Eva Amin | TEDxCherryCreekWomen](#)

# Resources

## Articles:

[Negative impact of daily screen use on inhibitory control network in preadolescence: A two-year follow-up study](#)

[Longitudinal associations between social media use, mental well-being and structural brain development across adolescence](#)

[Why young brains are especially vulnerable to social media](#)

[How Social Media Affects Your Teen's Mental Health: A Parent's Guide](#)

[Social Media and Mental Health in Children and Teens](#)

[Offline and Online Sexual Risk Behavior among Youth in the Netherlands: Findings from "Sex under the Age of 25"](#)

[Teen girls' online sex experiences set up offline dangers](#)

[Human Trafficking and Social Media](#)

[Cyberviolence Against Women and Girls: The Growing Threat of the Digital Age](#)

# Resources

## Articles:

[Traffickers Use of the Internet](#)

[Online Sexual Solicitation of Children and Adolescents](#)

[Student Blog Series: Impact of Social Media on the Life Cycle of Sex Trafficking](#)

[Media overload is hurting our mental health. Here are ways to manage headline stress](#)

[Mobile Spyware: How Hackers Can Turn Your Phone Into a Stalking Machine](#)

[Who's Spying on Your Computer or Mobile Device? Spyware, Surveillance, and Safety for Women](#)

[What Experts are Saying About The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#)

