

Social Media Influencers



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Social media influencers do wield significant power to shape opinions, particularly among young people. Therefore, their impact on youth mental health is quite concerning.

In today's digital world, anyone can be an influencer, exerting influence through their audience relationship. Comparisons to idealised lives on social media can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, while exposure to inappropriate content and distorted body image perceptions exacerbate the issue. The fast-paced environment inundates young people with information, making them susceptible to certain beliefs and evoke strong emotions. Attention has become a valued commodity, therefore influencers design content to captivate their audiences.

Filtered portrayals of perfect lives create unrealistic expectations. Comparisons with peers intensify insecurities and anxiety. Social media algorithms may also expose a young person to inappropriate content, fostering negative and divisive narratives which can then lead to cyberbullying and online harassment. It is important to guide a young person's social media use, and educate them about the realities of using it responsibly.



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Establish a safe and open environment

Encourage your child to discuss their online experiences, share their thoughts, opinions, and concerns about social media influencers. Ask open-ended questions to initiate discussions and listen attentively to their perspective. This will provide insight into their worldview and level of understanding. It will also increase the likelihood of your child coming to you with any concerns in the future.

Explain that it is often a marketing strategy

Help your child understand that social media influencers are often part of a marketing strategy that may promote services or products for financial gain. Parents need to proactively teach children about common advertising techniques such as product placement, endorsements, and sponsored content.

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Teach children critical thinking skills

Parents need to teach children to think critically about the content they encounter. Help them to develop the skills to evaluate the credibility, reliability, and authenticity of influencers and their messages. Encourage them to question the motives beyond the content and analyse whether it aligns with their own values.

Educate children about media literacy

Teach your child about media literacy and its importance in the digital age. Parents need to help them to understand the difference between fact and opinion, the concept of bias, and the potential impact of misinformation. We need to teach and encourage our children to fact-check information and verify sources before accepting it as the truth.

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Monitor your child's social media use

Regularly monitor your child's social media use and the influencers they may follow. Take the time to explore the content together and discuss the potential impact. Ask your child what they find appealing about certain influencers and provide constructive feedback if needed.

Establish guidelines around social media

Parents can establish guidelines around social media use such as screen time limits and appropriate platforms to your child's age. Encourage your child to engage in a variety of offline activities to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Emphasise the importance of real-life relationships, hobbies, and self-care.

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Model responsible social media use

Children learn by example, so it is important for parents to model critical thinking skills and responsible social media use. Show your child how to critically appraise content and make informed decisions online by sharing your own experiences and challenges with social media use and highlight how to keep a balance between online and offline life.

Teach children to be responsible online

Emphasise the importance of responsible digital citizenship by teaching children about online etiquette, respectful communication, and the potential consequences of sharing personal information online. Encourage your child to think about what they post, before they post it, and consider the impact of their own digital footprint.

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