# Image & Identity

## Image, identity and social media

Today we hear lots about the sorts of pressures young people face online when it comes to how they look and present their lives. Expectations from 'friends' and 'followers' to create that perfect selfie, or to portray yourself as being fashionable, popular or interesting online can be overwhelming. It may also leave us questioning who we really are versus how we showcase ourselves online – 'self vs selfie'.

## 82%
of women feel the beauty standards set by social media are unrealistic

### Why this issue is on the rise

There are a number of reasons why this issue is on the rise. Here are some of the key reasons:

**Increased access to technology** allows us to not only share various aspects of our lives and see what others are doing 24/7 via smartphones, tablets etc, it also allows others to comment on and engage with the content we share anytime, anywhere

**Trends in visual sharing** through apps such as Snapchat and Instagram, which are heavily focused on sharing videos and images, have fuelled the selfie movement, encouraging you to broadcast snapshots of your life

**Online influencers** such as YouTubers, Instagrammers and other celebrities regularly share content that presents the way they look and the things they do in a desirable light

**Popularity of photo editing apps** are making it easier than ever for you to edit images of yourself – changing your body shape, your skin tone or even the size of your eyes with the aim of making yourself look more aesthetically appealing

### How it makes your child feel

Social media is a fantastic tool for self-expression, and while for most that expression of our identity is healthy and even confidence-inducing, some are left feeling open to judgement, criticism or generally feeling insecure as our lives aren't as perfect as others' seem to be.

The vast majority of young people are able to manage these emotions, but for some it can lead to physical and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders.

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## Jargon Buster

**Selfie:**
A self-portrait photograph, usually captured using a digital device

**Usie:**
Similar to a selfie, but a group photo

**#nofilter:**
Use of this hashtag communicates to others that you haven't used any technology to enhance a video or photo

**FOMO:**
Stands for fear of missing out – the idea that when you're not actively looking at something on social media you're missing out

**MOMO:**
Stands for mystery of missing out. The anxiety you get when no one has posted on social media for a while and you fear you may be missing out on something

**Thinspiration:**
Websites, apps or content such as images and videos that feature slim women, with the aim of inspiring others to look similar

**On fleek:**
A term to describe someone who looks good

**Thirsty:**
Someone who's looking for attention

**Catfish:**
People who fabricate online identities

**Extra:**
Describes someone who's being over the top or trying too hard

## How to deal with identity and self-esteem issues

**Share management tactics** with your child such as digital detoxes (setting time aside to have a break from being online) or only following people who make them feel positive and inspired

**Discuss self-worth** reiterating that social media shouldn't just be all about hiding the aspects of our lives and ourselves we don't like, it should be about presenting yourself in a way that shows you value who you really are

**Talk regularly** about any trends they're seeing in the use of social media (such as the infamous 'thigh gap' trend) and how it makes them feel about themselves

**Seek medical help** if you're at all concerned that they may be suffering from physical or mental health issues such as anxiety, depression or an eating disorder

## Where to go for further information

There are some fantastic resources available to parents online that offer tips and advice on how to manage issues related to identity and self esteem. We recommend the following:

www.b-eat.co.uk

www.nhs.co.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.selfesteem.dove.co.uk

www.vodafone.com/content/parents

www.berealcampaign.co.uk