# Navigating online safety: Insights for parents from a psychotherapist



The recent release of Netflix’s drama "Adolescence" has ignited a significant national discussion regarding online safety, particularly in relation to the exposure of young people to harmful content on the internet. In light of this conversation, specialist psychotherapist and hypnotherapist Dipti Tait has shared her insights on how parents can effectively engage with their children about social media use, urging against outright bans.

Dipti Tait, who has more than 20 years of experience in her field, emphasises that shielding teenagers from social networks may be more detrimental than beneficial. She argues that while the internet is often blamed for adverse effects on youth, the root of the problem lies in adult misunderstandings of adolescent behaviour. In her discussion with the Manchester Evening News, Tait stated, "The internet isn’t actually the problem - it’s the adults." She believes adults frequently overlook the inherent rebellious nature of teenagers, who are naturally inclined to push boundaries and resist control.

The drama "Adolescence" has had a profound impact, prompting British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to invite the show's writer Jack Thorne and producer Jo Johnson to a discussion at Downing Street, alongside representatives from organisations such as the NSPCC and the Children’s Society. The Prime Minister expressed a desire to address societal issues regarding the influence of hate and misogyny on young boys, contemplating effective preventative strategies.

Moreover, the increasing urgency for social media platforms to adhere to stricter regulations has been highlighted by the forthcoming Online Safety Act, which mandates that online sites follow comprehensive guidelines established by Ofcom to shield users, especially minors, from harmful material.

Tait suggests that parents seeking to maintain an open dialogue with their teenagers should adopt a more conversational and inquisitive approach instead of adopting a directive stance that may induce defensiveness. She proposes engaging teens with open-ended statements such as: "I imagine some of the stuff online must feel intense or overwhelming at times." This method serves to creates a safer space for teens to share their online experiences without fear of immediate judgement.

As Tait explains, the effectiveness of these conversations hinges on understanding the internal experiences of adolescents. Particularly, she notes that pressing topics regarding safety can lead to teenagers shutting down; thus, fostering an environment based on empathy and understanding can yield more fruitful discussions.

In her recommendations for encouraging healthier tech use, Tait advocates for an approach she terms "controlling with inspiration." This entails allowing teens to perceive themselves as the architects of their own technology habits while also educating them about the design of social media platforms that seek to monopolise their attention. Through discussions about the neurobiological impacts of immediate gratification from social media, Tait urges adults to guide teenagers towards recognising long-term rewards tied to meaningful offline pursuits.

In addition, Tait addresses the critical issue of extremism and polarising views prevalent online. She underscores the importance of cultivating an environment where open and honest discussions can flourish, maintaining that it is essential for young people to explore different perspectives without fear of reprimand. By creating a space for debate, parents and guardians can equip youths with the tools needed to navigate complex social issues with a balanced viewpoint.

Through these insights and strategies, Tait aims to bridge the gap between adults and teenagers, fostering a foundation of trust and open communication that can lead to healthier interactions with the digital world.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/04/adolescence-digital-safety-online-harm/> - This source corroborates the impact of Netflix's 'Adolescence' on the debate around online safety and its effect on national discussions, highlighting the need for holistic digital safety measures. It also mentions the involvement of government officials and the importance of collaboration in addressing these issues.
* <https://www.breckfoundation.org/post/netflix-s-adolescence-online-safety> - This URL supports the points made about 'Adolescence' shedding light on online safety issues, emphasizing the need for education and open communication between parents and children to address online threats like grooming and cyberbullying.
* <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/adolescence-almost-no-change-use-online-safety-tools/> - This article discusses how 'Adolescence' has sparked conversations about online safety, although it notes a limited increase in the use of safety tools despite widespread parental concerns. It also touches on government actions to address harmful content.
* <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/search/?q=Dipti+Tait+interviews&ipp=10> - Unfortunately, no specific interview with Dipti Tait from Manchester Evening News could be found. However, this search result would typically provide insight into Dipti Tait's perspective on engaging with teenagers about their social media use.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/online-safety-bill-introduced-to-parliament> - This link, while not directly addressing 'Adolescence,' supports the discussion around stricter regulations for social media platforms through the Online Safety Act, emphasizing the protection of users, especially minors, from harmful content.