# Navigating online safety: Insights for parents on social media and youth



A growing discourse surrounding the role of social media in the lives of young people has emerged following the release of the Netflix drama "Adolescence." This series has catalysed conversations on online safety and the potential dangers of harmful content that children may encounter. Specialist hypnotherapist and psychotherapist Dipti Tait, who has extensive experience working with adolescents and their parents, shared her insights with the Manchester Evening News, offering guidance to parents on effectively engaging with youths about their online experiences.

Since its debut, "Adolescence" has been acknowledged for highlighting the severe ramifications that negative online interactions can have on young individuals. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak notably hosted a meeting with the series' writer Jack Thorne and producer Jo Johnson at Downing Street, where discussions focused on preventative measures to protect young boys from being drawn into harmful ideologies, particularly regarding hatred and misogyny. The Prime Minister's meeting included representatives from prominent organisations such as the NSPCC and the Children's Society, underscoring the urgency of the discourse.

In a move to promote the series as a tool for education, Netflix announced that it would make "Adolescence" available for free streaming in all secondary schools across the UK. This initiative comes on the heels of Sir Keir Starmer's comments regarding the influence of online ideologies on children, suggesting that the internet can directly inject harmful ideas into developing minds.

The discourse around online safety has been further fuelled by the implementation of the Online Safety Act, which outlines requirements for social media platforms to adhere to strict codes of practice outlined by Ofcom. This legislation aims to mitigate children’s exposure to harmful content, including hate speech, racism, and sexually explicit material.

Dipti Tait emphasises the importance of open communication rather than outright bans on social media access. Speaking to the Manchester Evening News, she remarked, “The internet and technology that so many fear isn't really the problem. The problem is that adults have totally forgotten what it was like to be a teenager.” Tait elaborates that teenagers possess a natural inclination towards rebellion and risk-taking, and overly restrictive parenting can lead to a withdrawal from open dialogue.

She further advises that parents should engage with their children by asking open-ended questions that foster dialogue rather than defensiveness. By altering the typical confrontational patterns that often characterise parent-teen interactions, parents can create a safe space for discussion. Tait suggests that adults approach conversations about online experiences by conveying understanding rather than imposing restrictions.

To facilitate this understanding, she recommends using relatable language, such as asking, “I imagine some of the stuff online must feel intense or overwhelming at times.” This method, as Tait describes, helps to lower defensive barriers, engaging teenagers in a more meaningful conversation about their online activities and feelings.

Tait also proposes a strategy called “pattern interruption,” whereby parents can shift the dynamic of the conversation by avoiding direct questions that might lead to evasion. Instead, she encourages discussions about broader concepts, such as the impact of social media on mental health, inviting children to reflect on their experiences in a way that fosters self-awareness.

In addition to cultivating open communication, Tait suggests that parents inspire adolescents to think critically about their futures. Engaging teens in a dialogue about their aspirations while highlighting the potential pitfalls of excessive social media use can guide them toward making informed choices without feeling controlled.

Moreover, she advocates for discussions about extremism in an inclusive manner, promoting an understanding of diverse perspectives. By framing these conversations with empathy and openness, parents can prepare their children to navigate complex ideological landscapes online and foster a genuine respect that encourages trust.

Overall, as discussions surrounding the influence of social media on youth continue to unfold, Tait’s insights into fostering constructive communication may prove beneficial for parents seeking to guide their children through the intricacies of growing up in a hyper-connected world. The conversation about online safety and the responsibilities of social media platforms is simultaneously evolving, encompassing legislative efforts aimed at safeguarding the adolescent population.

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

## Bibliography

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