

March 1, 2019

MOMO CHALLENGE

You may be aware, through recent news reports, or other sources, of a recent internet “game” called the *Momo Challenge*. It allegedly features a character named Momo, which asks children to contact it through a social media site and provides instructions on how to harm themselves or others.

This is not a game. In fact, it is a form of cyber bullying. It can be frightening and disturbing and can have dangerous repercussions for children. Although it is not known to what extent this game is real versus rumour, the safety and security of our students is always our first priority, so we are reaching out to you for additional support of the work we do with your children each and every day.

We have included a fact sheet of Internet safety tips with this Community Information Bulletin to assist in ensuring the safety of students online. If your child is not familiar with the Momo Challenge, we would not suggest bringing it to their attention, as it could spread fear and arouse curiosity. Rather, we encourage you to review the general suggestions included in this Bulletin with your child(ren) and be extra mindful of their online behaviour.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school principal. As always, we are here to help.

Thank you for your support in safeguarding the online protection of children.



TIP SHEET

Online Safety



March break is fast approaching. For many children and youth, the break provides some much-needed downtime, which may often include an increase in the amount of time spent online. With this in mind, the following suggestions may assist parents and guardians as they seek to ensure safe and healthy Internet use.

- 1) **Be aware** of what children and youth are accessing. The Internet can be a wonderful tool for learning and exploring the world. But there are some sites that provide unhealthy guidance or information and even prey on vulnerable youth. Monitor your child's use and ask him or her about the websites, links, and social media apps they are using.
- 2) **Inform** yourself about the websites your child finds most interesting.
- 3) **Speak** to your child and establish safe Internet practices. Let them know never to give out personal information online or arrange face-to-face meetings with anyone they have met online. Ask them to tell an adult anytime something on the Internet makes them feel confused or uncomfortable.
- 4) **Check** browser and search history frequently and keep devices in highly visible places in your home.
- 5) **Know the signs** of distress. Children show distress in many ways, including changes in behavior (e.g., withdrawal, performance at school, club or activity involvement) or physical health (e.g., sleeping and/or eating patterns). Other warning signs include sadness, hopelessness, or irritability. If you notice signs of distress, open a conversation with your child. Listen to his or her thoughts in a calm nonjudgmental way.
- 6) If you are concerned about your child's well-being, **reach out** to school or community mental health professionals for support. We are here to help!

Additional Community Supports:

- Your family doctor
- Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868
- 24.7 Crisis Support Peel 905-278-9036
- 24.7 Crisis Support Caledon 1-888-811-2222
- 911

Resources:

- Guidelines for parents on cybersafety/cyberbullying: <https://www.connectsafely.org/guides-3/> and https://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/cyberbullying_guide.pdf
- Prevention of cyberbullying: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention>
- Guideline for parents on self-harm: <http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/perch/resources/parenting-2.pdf>

We wish you all a safe and happy March break.