



Dangerous/Harmful TikTok Trends to Discuss with Your Child

7th June 2024

Dear parents/carers,

It has come to our attention that there is a concerning social media trend called the 'Blackout' Challenge - also known as the choking or pass-out challenge. TikTok users are encouraged to choke themselves or hyperventilate until they blackout then film their adrenaline rush as they regain consciousness. This deprives the brain of oxygen and can have serious health complications.

There are a range of other examples that you can read more about on the website below - <https://gabb.com/blog/tiktok-trends/>

TikTok currently has in excess of 1 billion monthly active users worldwide and allows for easily-accessible videos to be viewed by millions of young people, leading to 'viral trends' emerging.

Whilst the TikTok app provides videos that are often funny, relatable and catchy, there are also many that promote dangerous and harmful content. Our young people are hugely influenced by content they view on Social Media platforms and TikTok 'challenges' in particular encourage other users to create content copying specific tasks. Anyone can start a challenge and sometimes these become trends and patterns, which if replicated by your child could cause them serious harm.

A key message for parents is to never assume your child will not try a TikTok challenge or will 'know better'. Children are incredibly susceptible to engaging in risky behaviour. A normal part of development for a young person includes learning to master impulsivity, peer pressure and desires to one-up a friend no matter the cost. Research shows that teenage brains are wired differently to adults, making them attention, reward-seeking and impulsive by nature.

TikTok has taken some measures to protect against these potentially dangerous challenges after facing lawsuits and backlash, but even removed videos can still exist on the wider internet.

What can you do?

- Be aware of the dangerous and harmful content that your child can access online. Have open, simple conversations with your child about these topics, this can provide them with time to begin processing this before they are faced with a choice.
- TikTok has an age rating of 12+ so should not be accessed by any child under the age of 13. You know your child best and you should carefully decide when they're ready to access social media apps even when they reach this age. Even if your child doesn't have access to this platform, be aware they could easily hear about these challenges from peers.
- TikTok offers a parental control feature called 'Family Pairing' where you can make an account, link it to your child/children and enable helpful controls.
- Restricted mode is a setting that can be toggled on to automatically filter out content that may not be appropriate for young audiences, but like most online filters it doesn't catch everything.
- Screen time management.

Some TikTok and other social media challenges are more than just harmful, but could be potentially deadly. We therefore will keep informing parents/carers when these come to our attention.

Yours faithfully,

Mr R Houghton
Headteacher