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A Comprehensive Guide to Social Media Challenges: The Good, the Bad, and the Terrifying

Social media challenges have become an integral part of internet culture, captivating the attention of millions worldwide. The appeal of these challenges often lies in their ability to garner attention and fame, with participants seeking validation and a sense of belonging. To better understand and address the phenomenon, it's essential to discuss social media challenges with young people, exploring the potential risks and rewards associated with participating in them.

Fun and Harmless Social Media Challenges

Some social media challenges are harmless and even beneficial, serving as a fun, creative outlet or a way to raise awareness and funds for a good cause. For example, the Ice Bucket Challenge raised millions of dollars for ALS research and care, while the Mannequin Challenge promoted teamwork and collaboration. The Bottle Cap Challenge encouraged physical activity and skill development, showcasing participants' martial arts prowess.

Social Media Challenges with Negative Consequences

However, not all social media challenges are harmless. Some carry negative consequences, such as the Cinnamon Challenge, which involves consuming a spoonful of cinnamon without drinking water. This challenge can lead to choking, lung damage, and allergic reactions. Similarly, the Kylie Jenner Lip Challenge involves using a shot glass to create a suction effect on the lips, which can cause bruising, swelling, and potential tissue damage. Another example is the Fire Challenge, in which participants set themselves on fire and attempt to extinguish the flames, risking severe burns, property damage, and even death.

Social Media Challenges with Life-Threatening Risks

Some challenges pose life-threatening risks, such as the Blue Whale Challenge. This challenge involves a series of dangerous tasks over 50 days, culminating in self-harm. The challenge has been linked to mental health issues, self-harm, and even suicide. Similarly, the Momo Challenge involves receiving disturbing messages encouraging self-harm and suicide, leading to anxiety, fear, and potential self-harm or suicide. The Tide Pod Challenge, which involves biting into laundry detergent pods, can cause poisoning, chemical burns, and respiratory issues.

Understanding Why Young People Participate in Social Media Challenges

Young people may participate in social media challenges due to peer pressure, the desire to fit in, or the pursuit of online fame and validation. Additionally, young people often have underdeveloped decision-making and risk assessment skills, making them more susceptible to engaging in risky behaviour.

Addressing Social Media Challenges with Young People

To help young people navigate the world of social media challenges safely, it's essential to maintain open lines of communication and educate them about the potential dangers of risky challenges. Encourage critical thinking and self-reflection, empowering them to make safe and responsible choices.

Strategies for Parents, Teachers, and Caregivers

Parents, teachers, and caregivers can play a vital role in addressing social media challenges by monitoring social media usage, engaging in conversations about challenges, and encouraging safe and positive online behavior. Collaborating with schools and communities to raise awareness about the risks associated with challenges can also be beneficial.

Exploring the Impact of Social Media Challenges on Mental Health

Social media challenges can have a significant impact on mental health, particularly those related to body image. Challenges like the Thigh Gap Challenge, the Belly Button Challenge, and the Earphones Waist Challenge perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards and can contribute to cyberbullying, harassment, and self-esteem issues.

The Role of Influencers and Celebrities in Social Media Challenges

Influencers and celebrities often play a role in promoting social media challenges. They have a responsibility to endorse safe and positive challenges, as promoting harmful challenges can have severe consequences for their followers.

The Role of Social Media Platforms in Regulating Challenges

Social media platforms must ensure user safety by regulating the content related to challenges. They should establish strategies for reporting and removing harmful content and collaborate with users and communities to maintain a safe environment.

Promoting Positive Social Media Challenges and Campaigns

Fostering a positive social media experience can be achieved by encouraging participation in safe and constructive challenges.

Examples of such challenges include:

The 10-Year Challenge, which encourages reflection on personal growth and change.

The Gratitude Challenge, which involves sharing daily expressions of gratitude.

The Kindness Challenge, which inspires performing and sharing acts of kindness.

These challenges can promote community-building and social connection.

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