

The Momo Challenge

There are disturbing reports doing the rounds concerning the “Momo challenge”. This “game” allegedly encourages children to perform self-harm and even suicide. There is a great deal of misinformation flying around the web and social media making it difficult to separate fact from fiction.

The “game” is played over WhatsApp or an App downloaded onto mobile devices.

The Image

The image used in the game and on social media is a female type face with distorted features. It is actually a sculpture called “Mother Bird” by Japanese special effects creator Keisuke Aisawa. Aisawa has nothing to do with this “challenge”. (Lloyd, 2019)

The Game

The game began as a series of messages sent to participants via WhatsApp. The players are expected to complete a challenge every day. Refusal is met with threats being made. Allegedly the final task is to commit suicide.

What Can Parents Do?

The BBC News website carries a quote from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) saying Momo is “a current, attention-grabbing example of the minefield that is online communication for kids”. They urge parents to not just focus on Momo and instead:

- Ensure they know what their children can access online
- Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know
- Tell their children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do
- Use parental controls to keep children safe (McCann, n.d.)

Is it worth mentioning that much of the reporting is exaggerated and the source are questionable. Parent Zone do a useful three minute briefing on the Momo Challenge (Parent Zone, n.d.) But as the PSNI said, it is important to not just focus on Momo. It is always worth being aware of what your children are doing and accessing online and staying up to date with current issues using places like The NSPCC and Parent Zone. Parents should also take care sharing things on social media which spread fear, exaggerate situations or have questionable sources.

If adults have concerns or would like more information they can contact NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or [visit their website](#).

Children who are worried about things they see online or in apps can talk to an adult at home or school or call Childline on 0800 111 or [through their website](#).

Bibliography

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