

Addressing the pressure
to be perfect toolkit:



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Parents toolkit: Creating a positive image online

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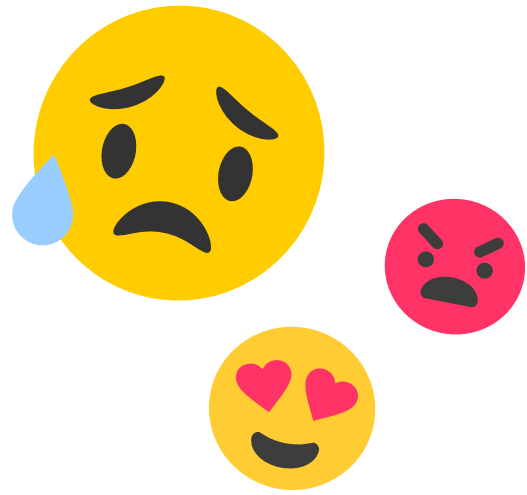
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Knowing how to **help our young people balance the demands of daily life** with their budding sense of freedom and independence is a complicated task, especially when technology allows them the ability to do so much at one time!

While most parents try to keep general tabs on where their children are, offline and online, it can help to have a general understanding of areas in which you can expect to see signs of maturation.

Independence



A few things to look for:

- Do they have areas in their life where they have the **ability or freedom to make important decisions?**
- If they make mistakes, **are they able to recognise and learn** from them?
- Do they have opportunities for **trying out new skills?** In areas related to relationships, emotional maturity, or skill-building (putting effort into school is definitely one sign of this but there are other ways to build skills that set the stage for full independence, as well)

Being an adult requires multiple forms of independence in a number of areas.

For example, **being able to build and maintain positive relationships, manage emotions, and eventually to economically support yourself**, are areas in which you can expect to see maturation and change as young people move into adulthood.

Confidence

All people want to experience what it's like to be really good at least one thing.

Children will often work tirelessly on various projects just to start learning and practising the skills they will need later. **Confidence comes from discovering and developing natural talents** and from working on skills that come less naturally.



A few things to look for:

- Do they have and take up **opportunities to master a skill in one or more area** (e.g. music, art, academics, athletics, social relationships)?
- Are they willing to **try new things?**
- Do they **recognise and appreciate** their achievements?

Connectedness

Connectedness is feeling cared for and caring for others.

We can be connected to individuals and to groups of people or places, like a school. **Children and young people will often experience a sense of connectedness** in several life areas – to a family or particular family members, one or more friends, school, clubs, even their borough, town or city. No matter what it seems like from the outside, people with low connectedness rarely thrive.



A few things to look for:

- Do they have friends (at least one) or groups **they interact with and authentically enjoy being with?**
- Do they have **at least one confidant** –someone they feel like they can be themselves with?
- Do the relationships with their inner circle of friends **generally leave your teen feeling at least neutral if not upbeat?** (feeling or seeming chronically depressed or down after seeing one or more specific friends is generally a red flag)



A few things to look for:

- Do they have opportunities to **support and assist others** (people, plants, animals, anything that leads to feeling like one is contributing to something in a meaningful way)?
- Do they enjoy (or at least not complain too much about!) **contributing to others/groups** they are connected to?

Usefulness

Usefulness is the experience of someone making a contribution to something in the world one values (people, groups, or causes).

This can be as seemingly small as **helping a friend with something important** to her/him/them or as large as being part of a group where one has regular tasks and responsibilities. Experiencing oneself as useful can strengthen a sense of connectedness, confidence, and independence.

Advice provided by Dr. Janis Whitlock - Developmental Psychologist and the Director of the Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery

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