



Sharing Molly's story

Talking with children and young people

We know that when stories like Molly's are covered in the media or discussed by adults, young people may naturally ask questions.

Here are 5 ways you can safely explore the issues raised in Molly's story with children and young people.

What can we learn from Molly's story?

1.

Make digital wellbeing something you work on together.

- Agree moments you want to protect from screens, such as mealtimes or bedtime, and try small changes as a family.
- Try simple digital clear outs together by unfollowing or muting content that brings you down. Talk about why some posts seem supportive at first but keep you feeling low and use the opposite as a way to explore what genuinely lifts you.

2.

Keep conversations open at mealtimes.

- Talk about how apps decide what to show us and why feeds differ from person to person
- Discuss whether apps can tell the difference between helpful and harmful content.
- Explore how we want to feel online vs how it leaves us feeling and what to do when something online makes us feel low, anxious or unsettled.

3.

Work through worries together and make it a healthy family habit.

- Ask open questions like "What do you think would help?" or "How can we figure this out together?"
- Explain your own thinking so they can see different ways to approach problems.
- Make small decisions together and check in later to see what is helping.
- Remind them that you are on their side and that you will keep working things out as a team.

4.

Help your child know where to turn for support.

- Explain that everyone needs support sometimes and that heavy feelings do not have to be faced alone.
- Offer steady reassurance that you are there for them
- Offer reassurance that you're always there to support.
- Share helplines and advice which your child can access independently like [**Childline \(0800 11 11\)**](https://www.childline.gov.uk) and [**Shout \(85285\)**](https://www.shout24.org.uk).

5.

Share Molly's story with care.

You know your child best, and you are in the strongest position to decide if and how to share stories like Molly's. The aim of sharing real stories should always be to spark thoughtful conversations, not to focus on difficult details. We have provided two versions to guide discussions with younger and older children, which you can adapt to what feels appropriate for your family.

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In the UK, we lose one young life a week to suicide where technology has played a role.”



Talking about Molly's story with younger children (aged 9-11)

1. "I want to tell you about a real girl called Molly. She was a teenager who used the internet and apps, just like lots of young people do."

2. "Molly often saw pictures and videos on social media apps. After a while, these apps started showing her a lot of sad and upsetting content which started to make her feel very sad."

3. "That wasn't Molly's fault and it would have been hard for her to know why she was feeling that way."

4. "The apps should have been a safe place for her, but they weren't checking if the content was safe or thinking about how it might make someone feel."

5. "Apps have been designed to show you things you have seen before or things which will keep you watching."

(You can pause here and check in)

6. "What happened to Molly taught adults an important lesson about the harmful content young people can see online and how this might affect them."

7. "Molly's story is now being shared to help everyone understand and talk about this so we can change things for the better."

8. "When I heard Molly's story it made me think about you going online. I want to make sure you see things that make you feel happy, supported and inspired. What do you think we could do to help that happen?"

(Have a discussion using the points below before ending with reassurance)

Talking about Molly's story with older children (aged 12+)

1. "I want to talk to you about a young person called Molly Russell, whose experience online has helped people understand important problems that need to be fixed."

2. "Molly used social media and apps in the same way many young people do."

(You can pause here and see if they know of Molly's story already)

3. "When Molly was struggling with her mental health, the apps she used started showing her more and more content about sadness, self-harm, and hopelessness. The more she watched, the more the apps pushed similar content to her."

4. "The problem was that the apps didn't recognise that this content was hurting her. They were designed to show her similar content to keep her attention, even when it wasn't healthy. They didn't protect her when they should have."

5. "Harmful content can be subtle and easily disguised as supportive content about feelings. Repeatedly seeing upsetting content can have a negative impact on anyone, especially if they are already feeling low."

6. "After Molly died, her family wanted to understand why this had happened. An investigation found that the online platforms played a role by repeatedly recommending harmful content to her."

7. "When I heard about Molly's story it made me realise.../ reflect on..."

(This is your opportunity to have a discussion using the points below before ending with reassurance)

Follow up discussion points

- Deciding together what is safe to watch or click on
- Exploring how to report things online
- Reinforcing the importance of talking to someone like you or a teacher
- Balancing screen time with other activities.
- Understanding how algorithms shape what we see and cause cumulative harm
- Recognising the signs of harmful content and exploring its impact
- Reaching out for support when dealing with heavy feelings.

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If anything you ever see online makes you feel worried, upset, or confused, you don't have to deal with it alone. I want to help and together we can fix things.”

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If anything you ever see online makes you feel low, depressed or like you are a burden, you don't have to deal with it alone. I want to help, you don't need to feel that way and together we can fix things.”

(If your child asks what happened to Molly you can share a simple sentence like ‘Molly sadly died because of the impact of the content she was seeing online and how she was feeling.’)

Support available

SHOUT

Text ‘MRF’ to **85258**

Free, confidential crisis text line for anyone, any age available 24/7

Papyrus HOPELINE247

0300 102 2470

Text **HOPE** to **88247** or **pat@papyrus-uk.org**

Free 24/7 support for under 35s and those concerned about a young person

NSPCC Helpline

0808 800 5000 or **help@nspcc.org.uk**

Free, confidential support for anyone who is worried about the safety and wellbeing of a child

NSPCC Childline

0800 1111

Free, confidential support for young people under 19, available 24/7

NHS 111

Dial 111

Select ‘mental health help’ for urgent help or advice

In an emergency don't be afraid to dial 999