# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

Primary | April 2024

St Joseph
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

In this month's issue:

- Screen time reduction
- Disordered eating
- App focus: Kik

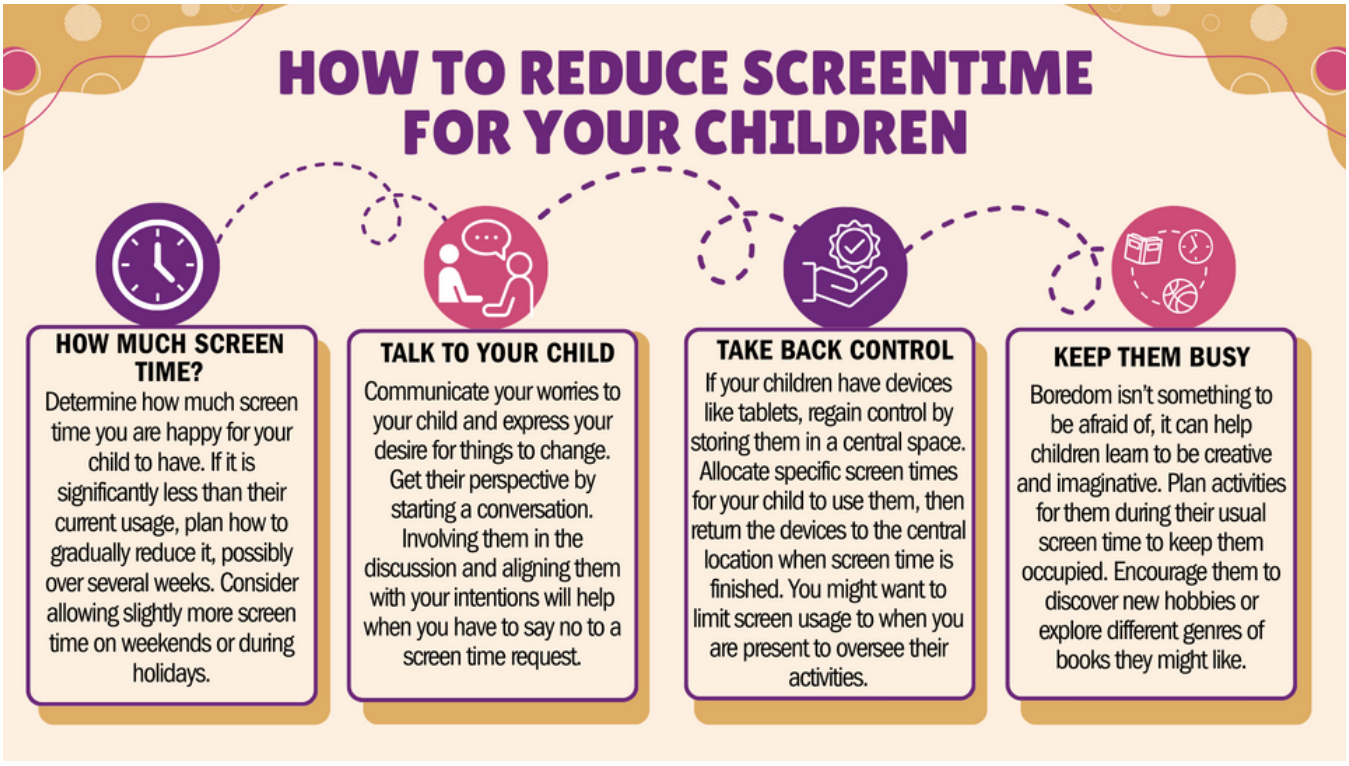
For most children, screen time is a common part of their daily routine. Parents find it beneficial as it keeps their children entertained while managing their daily tasks. While scientists are still discovering more about this topic, it is evident that excessive screen time can negatively impact children's brains. Spending more time in front of screens than interacting with peers and adults can hinder a child's social skills, affecting their ability to read social cues and impeding their imaginative development. Furthermore, it can disrupt their sleep quality, ultimately impacting their learning abilities at school.

If you allow your child screen time, it is generally recommended to limit it to a short duration each day. It is also essential to monitor what they are watching to ensure it adds value to their lives. Opt for programs with positive messages, foster creativity, and develop characters to offer a more enriching experience for your child.

If you are concerned about how much screen time your child currently has, it is a good time to put some boundaries in place. Before you do this, it is important to monitor when and for how long they are on their screens. Keeping a diary for a week or so is a good place to start.

**Suggestions to Facilitate Reducing Screen Time:**

- Prepare a bag with toys, games, and drawing supplies for outings, instead of screens
- Swap YouTube and TikTok for CBeebies or movies on streaming platforms
- Designate tech-free periods at home where you also put away your devices
- Prompt your child about time limits when they start using screens
- Use timers during screen time and provide a heads-up before it ends
- Maintain consistency with screen time schedules; while challenging initially, your child will adapt to the adjustments over time



# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

## What is Disordered Eating?

Disordered eating is a coping mechanism that some young individuals adopt during challenging periods. It is a mental health condition that can impact anyone. This behaviour may involve restricting food intake, consuming large amounts of food in one sitting, using unhealthy methods to eliminate food (such as inducing vomiting, abusing laxatives, fasting or excessive exercising), or a mixture of these actions.

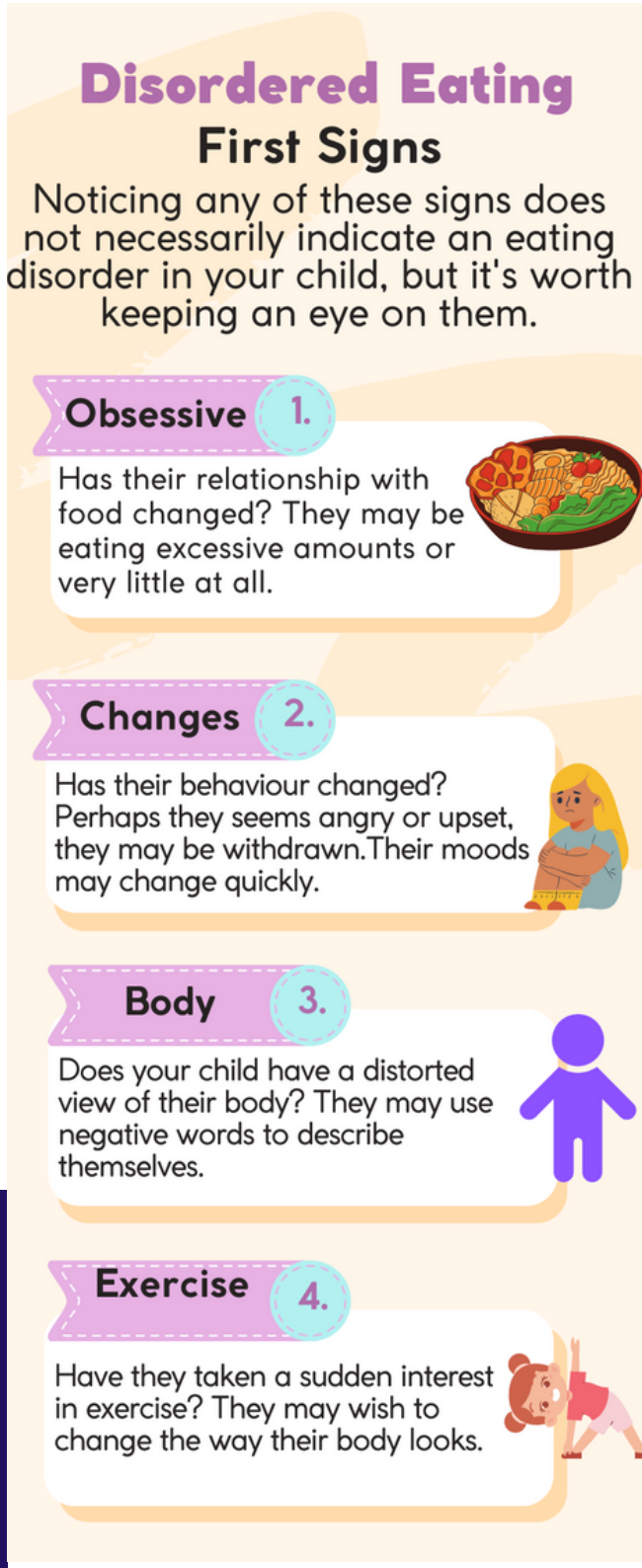
## Talking To Your Child About Disordered Eating

Starting a conversation might seem difficult so opening the conversation with an observation might help. An example of this is "I've noticed you aren't eating as much as you usually do, is everything ok?"

## What to do if your child does have disordered eating

It is important that your child knows that you are there to support them and that the first step is for you to speak to your GP. It is it important for you to inform school but let your child know that this will be kept confidential and other children will not find out.

There is a huge amount of support on the Internet for parents. A leading charity for eating disorders that also has lots of guidance and advice is BEAT.




## Kik Messenger

### What is Kik?

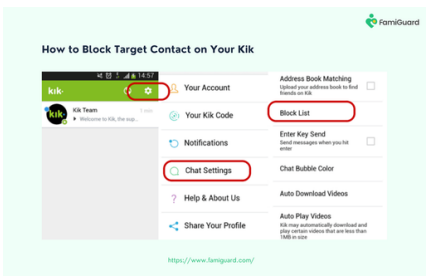
Kik messenger is another direct messenger app available for young people to download for free. It has more than 300 million registered users. The app allows the sending of text, video and GIFs. You can also play games in Kik and access a number of internal apps.

### The risks around Kik

Kik makes it very easy for unknown users to contact each other and even has an internal dating app where you can find a list of all users in your age range. This makes it very easy for adults, posing as a teenagers, to contact children. Explicit images can be sent through Kik which can lead to young people sharing inappropriate images of themselves, as well as adults sending sexual abuse imagery.

### Parental controls

Kik does not have any specific parental controls but it does have some chat privacy and blocking settings which can be accessed. Chat is only stored on the phone and cannot be accessed by Kik.




Blocking feature on Kik.

©The Enlightened Practitioner

Click for The Enlightened Parent