

# Ditch The Label: dealing with mental health in the digital age

## DITCH THE LABEL

*We may be emerging from the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK, but with the pandemic came one of the greatest mental health crises this country has ever seen. Young people especially, found themselves in a situation that they never thought they would. Cut off from friends, education, family members and anything else that makes your teenage years what they are, we have never seen such rapid growth in reports of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts among young people. In this blog, [Ditch the Label](#), an international youth charity supporting 12-25 year olds, shares their expertise on providing*

*young people support on mental health issues.*

During the pandemic, we all had to lead much more of our lives online. With schools and workplaces shut, everything had to take place in a whole new way. Our screen time went through the roof (as no doubt your phone probably also told you). As a result of this, we have been exposed to a lot more of the negativity that often comes with leading our lives on social media. Cyberbullying, comparison to social media and witnessing online hate speech are prevalent in digital spaces, and all have the potential to negatively impact mental health.

Protecting mental health in the digital age is important, perhaps now more than ever. But we also know that cutting young people off from online life altogether has the potential to be more damaging to them than you might think. Here's a few things that can be done to cut down on the negative impact that could be felt.

### **Encourage social media breaks**

Whether it's for a day a week or a few hours each day, taking a break from social media can be a great way to ease some of the stress that it can cause. Quite simply, if you aren't looking at it, then you can't get swept up into a spiral of comparing yourself to others.

### **Or encourage some phone-free time**

Great for cutting down on social media use but also allowing yourself to breathe and be present in the moment. Fill the time with something else you enjoy instead, whether it's reading, exercise, gaming – anything!

### **Spend time with people that care**

Spending time with those in your life that you connect with, that are supportive and honest with you can help to ease some of the negative impacts of cyberbullying. It reminds you that there is a support system in place for you in the real world, which can be really easy to forget when there is something big going on in your life online.

### **Report hate speech when you see it, and bullying if it happens**

Every social media outlet and online game has a reporting tool where you can flag things to be taken down. If you are concerned it will take too long, you can report to us at Ditch the Label [here](#). We are a trusted flagger and we can get most abusive, harassing and bullying content removed in 48 hours. You should also keep a record of what you see or receive, as this will help the removal process, and will provide you with evidence should it be escalated to the authorities.

### **Talk about it**

No one needs to suffer in silence. Whether it's a colleague, friend, sibling, partner, or anyone else that you trust, you should feel comfortable speaking about what is going on with you. Choose a safe space and share how it's made you feel. Knowing you have someone who can support you when the chips are down is important. If you feel like you don't have anyone to talk to, you can visit the Ditch the Label Community [here](#) for free anonymous support and advice.

Ditch the Label has an extensive range of resources dedicated to supporting young people through cyberbullying and witnessing online hate speech. Go to [www.ditchthelabel.org](http://www.ditchthelabel.org) to explore their support resources.

## Notes

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*This text was [originally published](#) on the eNurture blog and has been re-posted with permission and small amendments.*

*This post gives the views of the authors and does not represent the position of the LSE Parenting for a Digital Future blog, nor of the London School of Economics and Political Science.*

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