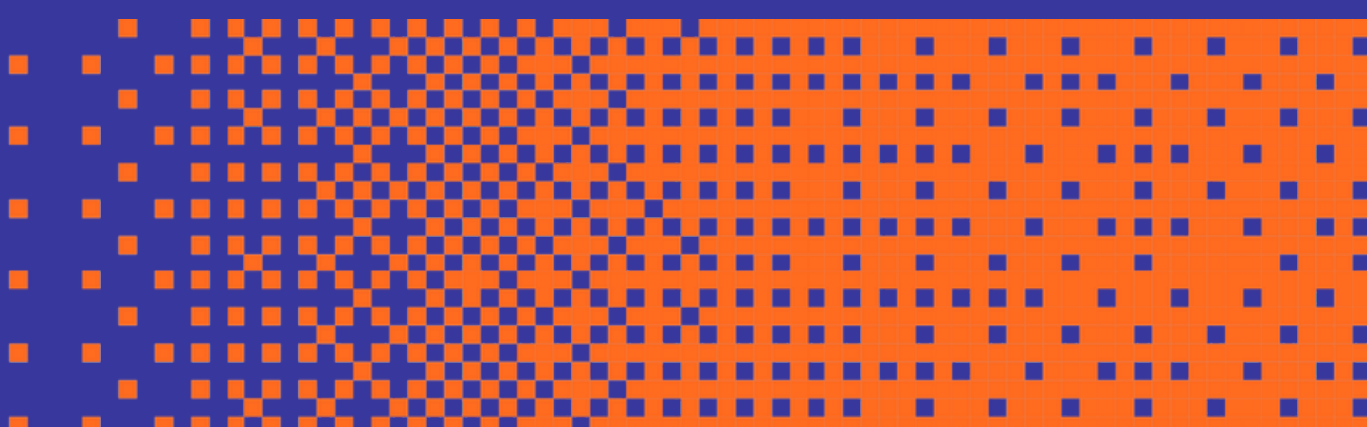




SAME SIDE

You don't have to have all the answers
You just need to start the conversation

Parent & Caregivers Conversation Guide
The Manosphere

CONTENTS



Introduction

01

Understanding the
Manosphere

02

Why Does this Matter?

03

What Can We Do?

04

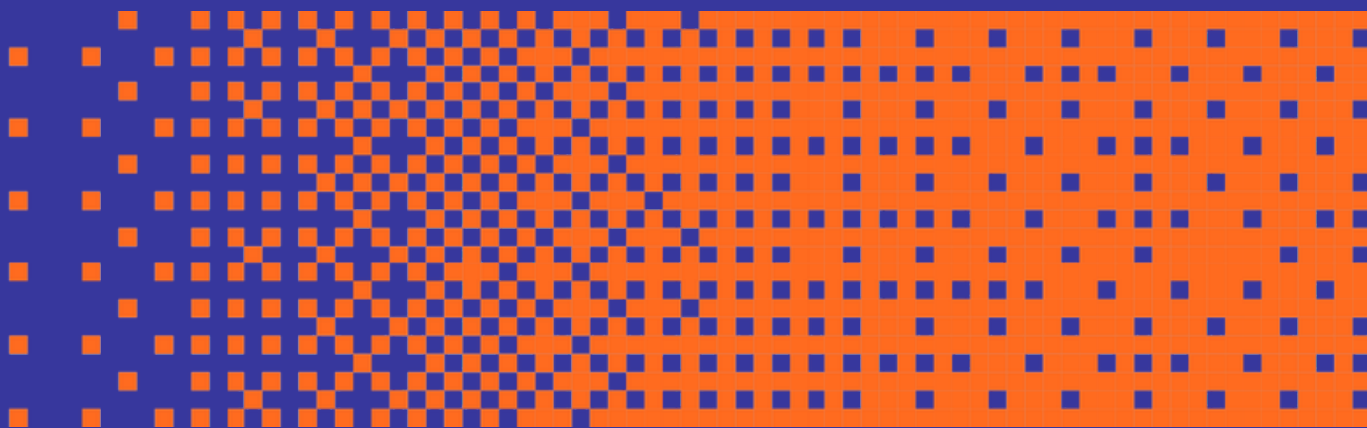
We're on the Same Side

INTRODUCTION

Today's young people spend more time online than preceding generations. Even younger children commonly use tablets and watch videos, and some access platforms where they can interact with others before their teens. Secondary school aged boys we work with tell us they spend, on average, eight hours a day on the internet, with gaming, social media and watching YouTube streams taking up most of their online time.

As well as a source of recreation, the internet can be a really important source of learning and belonging for young people: as well as going online to complete schoolwork, many young people use the internet to connect with friends, get advice about dating and relationships, find answers to their questions about growing up and explore aspects of their developing identities.

In this context, lots of parents, carers and guardians of young people are asking how they can guide the young people in their lives toward safe, healthy online lives. One growing concern is the manosphere: a loose network of online spaces for men and boys which promote harmful ideas about women and girls. Understanding these spaces, how they work and why they appeal to some boys and men, can help adults support young people safely and confidently.



1. UNDERSTANDING THE MANOSPHERE

WHAT IS THE MANOSPHERE?

The manosphere isn't a single website or organisation. It's a collection of online spaces – including forums, video channels and social media groups – mostly populated by men and boys. A range of topics are discussed within these spaces, including masculinity, relationships and self-improvement. Although these communities differ in lots of ways, they share hostility toward women and women's rights (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Internet Matters).

Common ideas of concern include:

- That women's rights disadvantage men
- That men are entitled to women's attention or sex
- That society unfairly prioritises women over men

While misogyny exists across the internet, the manosphere is a major source of such ideas and a gateway to more extreme content. It's important to note that not every online group or community aimed at men and boys, or populated by mostly men and boys, is automatically part of the manosphere: manosphere groups share a worldview that is anti women's rights.

MISOGYNY IS...

a dislike of, contempt for, hatred of or
ingrained prejudice against women on the
basis of their gender

KEY GROUPS IN THE MANOSPHERE

01

Incels (Involuntary Celibates)

Believe they are doomed to be rejected by women for the rest of their lives and blame women for their unhappiness. They see attraction as purely based on looks and status, and many express anger or resentment towards women

02

Pick-Up Artists (PUAs)

Claim to teach men how to attract women, often through manipulation or emotional control. Their approach treats relationships as competition and women as prizes, reinforcing harmful ideas about dominance and entitlement.

03

Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)

Encourage men to avoid relationships with women entirely, arguing that this protects men from exploitation or harm

04

Men's Rights Activists (MRAs)

Focus on men's issues such as mental health or father's rights. Some engage in legitimate discussion and are not explicitly misogynistic. Others reject women's rights, push misogynistic views and claim society is biased toward women

How These Groups See Themselves

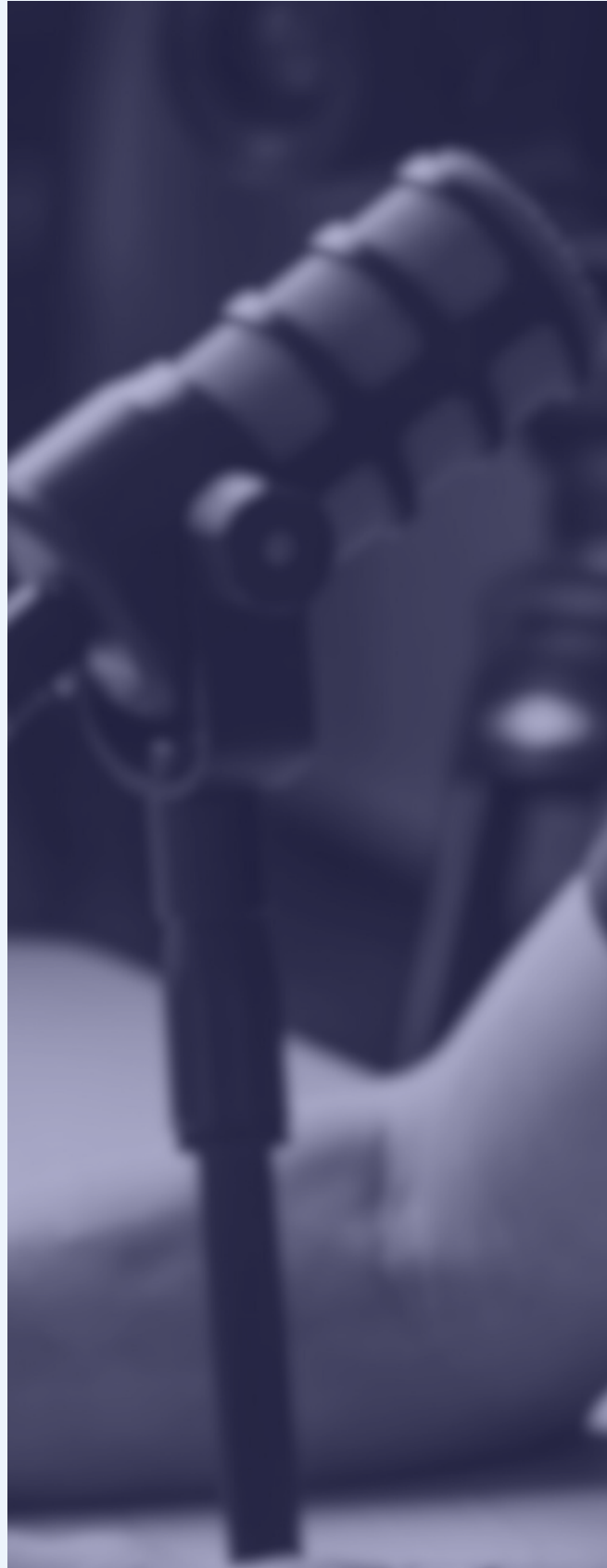
The term *manosphere* is used mainly by researchers - people and groups within the manosphere don't really use this term to describe themselves. The groups within it don't necessarily see themselves as part of the same online ecosystem: they often deny any connection to one another and sometimes openly disagree. Yet they share a worldview that blames women for men's frustrations and treats equality as a threat.

INFLUENCERS

Many influencers online discuss masculinity, fitness or success in ways that echo manosphere thinking, even if they're not part of any manosphere group. They may:

- Criticise women's rights or claim women have unfair advantages
- Promote 'alpha' hierarchies, where the strongest, most successful and most attractive men are 'alphas' and everybody else is a 'beta' or 'sigma'
- Present dominance and self-reliance as essential to manhood
- Encourage manipulative or transactional approaches to relationships

Because their content often looks like harmless self-improvement advice, harmful messages can be hard for young people to spot.



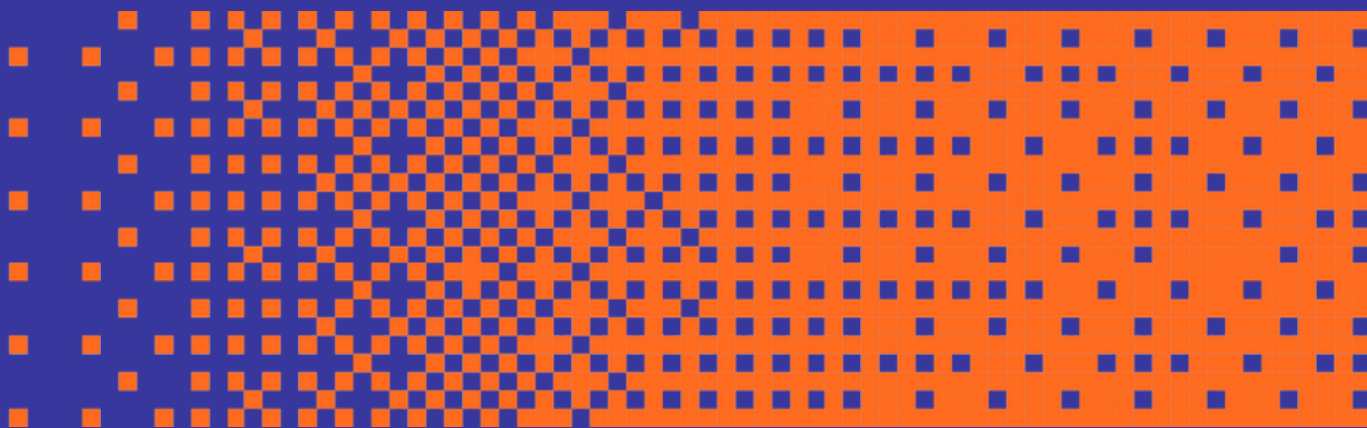
HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE END UP ACCESSING THIS CONTENT?

Young people may be exposed to manosphere spaces and to misogynistic content even without looking for it. Research shows that misogynistic ideas and manosphere talking points are spreading far beyond niche corners of the web: these ideas can now be found on mainstream social media apps that many young people use every day. Algorithms on platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram promote content that provokes strong reactions, including harmful or extreme material.

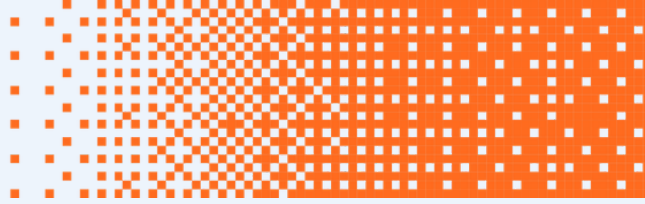
This means misogynistic content is often pushed to the top of users' social media feeds - even younger children can come across it when watching videos or playing games online, and this may be especially confusing if they lack the context to understand what they're seeing.

According to ASCL's Safer Scrolling report (2023):

- Harmful content is often presented as entertainment and becomes more extreme over time
- Boys who feel lonely or excluded are at higher risk of exposure - they might begin by looking at content about finding community or about self-improvement, but are swiftly exposed to increasingly misogynistic content that blames women and women's rights for their loneliness
- Misogynistic attitudes online can shape real-world peer and dating behaviour



2. WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



Manosphere ideas influence how young people see themselves, how they relate to others and how they approach relationships. Manosphere ideas can have negative impacts for all young people.

SELF ESTEEM

For boys and young men

Exposure to manosphere content can pressure boys into narrow ideas of masculinity based on dominance, wealth and control. Boys who feel they cannot meet these standards may turn their frustration outward or inward, leading to resentment, anxiety or low self-worth

For girls and young women

Girls face constant exposure to messages that devalue or objectify women, suggesting their worth lies in appearance or sexual availability. Over half of girls aged 11–21 feel unsafe because of sexism and only one in four feel confident about their future (Girlguiding). Some girls even avoid school or certain activities to escape harassment. Exposure to sexist comments and behaviour often begins in primary school (NEU and UKFeminista)

For all young people

Sexist jokes and objectifying language can easily become normalised as 'banter', eroding empathy and mutual respect. Over time, this damages peer relationships and culture for everyone, both inside and outside school.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Online misogyny doesn't stay online. 1 in 3 women in the UK have experienced online abuse (Refuge). The Open University found that one in ten women they surveyed had experienced online abuse, rising to one in four among women aged 16–24. Some reported that the abuse later escalated into offline violence.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

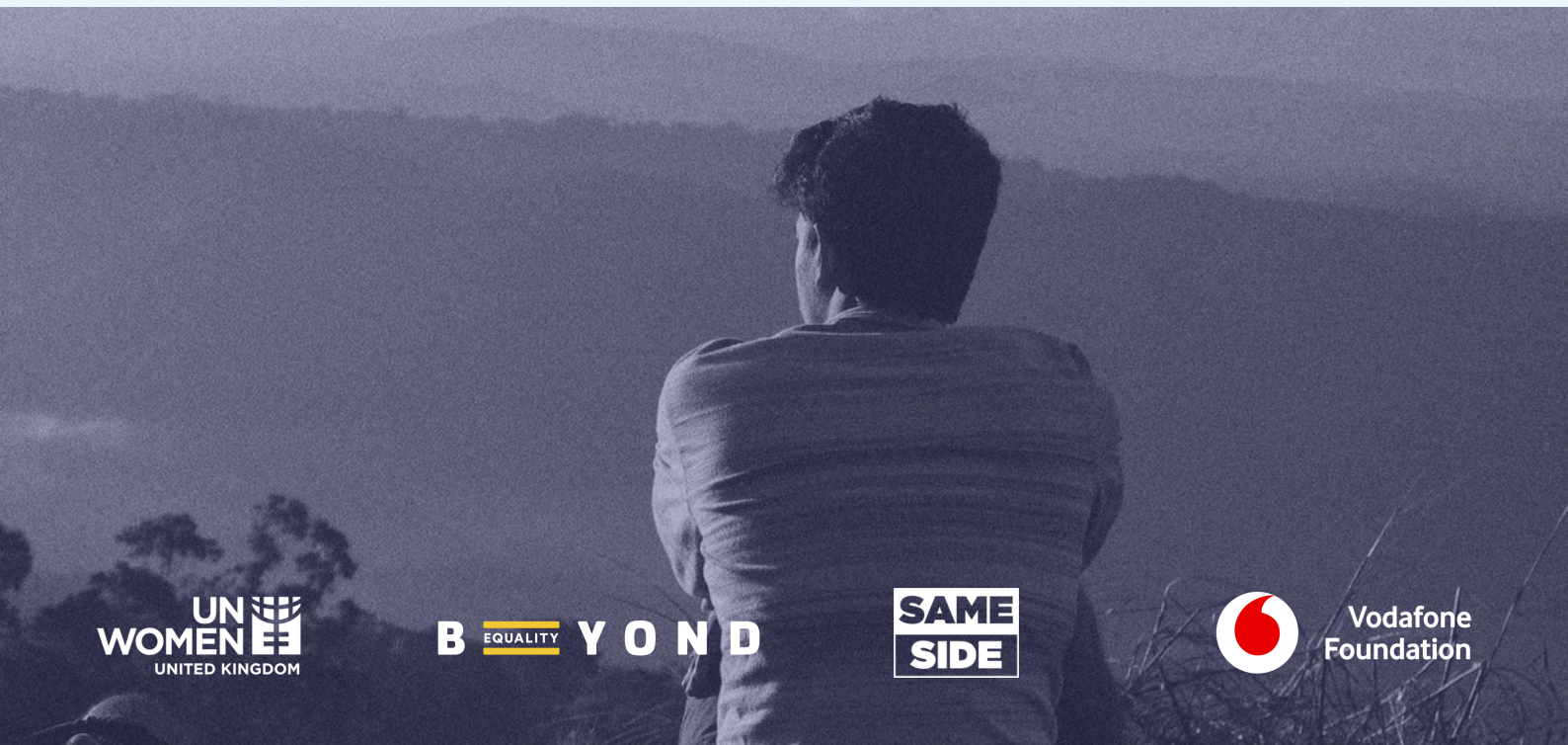
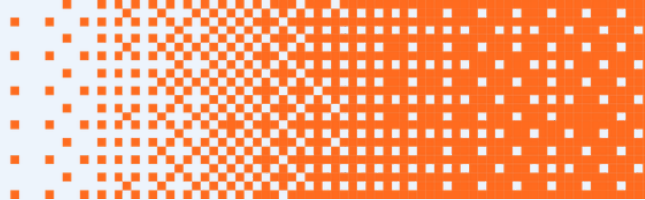
Manosphere messages promote distorted ideas about relationships, such as:

- men must be dominant and women submissive
- men are owed sex or attention
- women will leave if they aren't controlled

These myths can shape teenage dating experiences and carry into adult life. Relationships built on control or entitlement are more likely to become unhealthy or abusive

DISCRIMINATORY VIEWS

In some parts of the manosphere, homophobia, transphobia and racism are common alongside misogyny. Being exposed to these views can influence some young people and lead them to adopt discriminatory attitudes, which may then affect how they treat their peers. As a result, the manosphere can pose real risks to the safety and dignity of LGBTQ+ and racialised young people - and for those who are also young women, these risks are intensified by misogyny.



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR: BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

In some cases, a young person's behaviour may change as they become increasingly isolated and begin to align with more extreme manosphere content. These behavioural changes might include:

Social withdrawal

Contributing little or nothing to conversations where they would usually share their thoughts and opinions

Secrecy around online activity

spending more time online and expressing rigid or newly adopted ideas about women that differ from those around them

Distancing from peers and family

losing interest in friends and relatives who do not share their views, and relying more heavily on online communities at the expense of real-life relationships

Shifts in attitudes

showing increased distrust or hostility towards women, or unhealthy preoccupations with "manliness" and the need to appear dominant or strong

Dismissive behaviour towards women and girls

undermining their contributions, voices, or authority, including teachers and public figures, sometimes masked as "humour" that minimises or dehumanises

Sexual objectification

Reducing women and girls to their physical appearance, which may escalate to explicit sexual harassment such as name-calling, suggestive comments or jokes, or sharing inappropriate images, memes, messages, or videos

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR: SHIFTS IN LANGUAGE

A key indicator that a young person is consuming harmful misogynistic content is a noticeable change in the language they use. Pay attention to new words or phrases that may appear in their vocabulary, often learned through online spaces. Here are some common manosphere terms used to devalue and objectify women and girls and promote a narrow view on what it means to be a man:

'Red pill', or to be 'Red pill'

A belief referring to a person having 'woken up' to the, false, reality that society favours women over men. Borrowed from the movie 'The Matrix', it also suggests that people who disagree have taken the 'blue pill'

Hypergamous / Hypergamy

Used to demean women by portraying them as only interested in forming relationships with men who are more attractive, wealthy, or powerful

Femoids / FHOs (Female Humanoid Organisms)

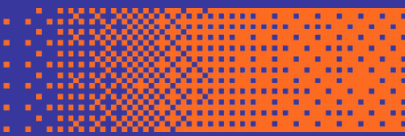
An insulting term comparing women to androids/robots, pushing the narrative that women are not only less than men, but less than human

AWALT (All Women Are Like That)

A stereotyping term claiming that all women possess narrow, negative traits such as being overly emotional or financially motivated, with little or no capacity for rational thought

'Alpha Male' & 'Chad' / 'Beta Male' & 'Cuck'

Labels that promote a narrow, harmful hierarchy of masculinity. "Alpha males" or "Chads" are framed as desirable, dominant, and successful with women and money, while "beta males" or "cucks" are mocked as weak, subordinate, or unworthy, particularly if they show respect towards women



THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR: SHIFTS IN LANGUAGE



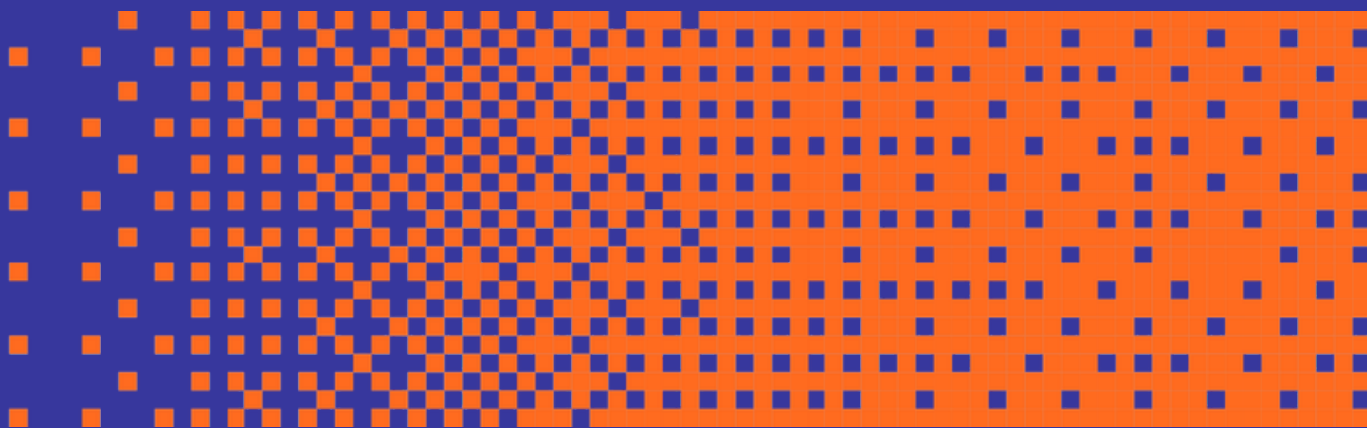
While this is not an exhaustive list, understanding these terms and noticing changes in how a young person talks or behaves can help you recognise early signs of influence and provide timely support.

Young people may sometimes pick this language up from memes, social media content or TV and may be repeating it without understanding what it means, or because they think it's funny.

If you hear the young people in your life using language like this, it's worth checking in with them about where they heard these terms and what they understand these terms to mean.

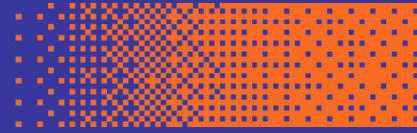
This can help you better understand whether they're actively consuming manosphere content.

Take the time to explain to them why these terms are harmful - for example, you could ask 'how do you think girls in your class/youth group/family might feel if they heard you saying that?'



3. WHAT CAN WE DO?

WHAT CAN WE DO?



The ideas that circulate in the manosphere can have negative impacts for all young people, shaping the way boys and young men think about themselves and the way they relate to others, and encouraging harmful attitudes that put other people, especially women and girls, at risk. Strong, trusting relationships with adults are the best protection. When young people feel able to talk about their online lives without fear, they are more likely to ask for help and reflect on what they see. The following tips can help support conversations about the manosphere and online life more broadly with all young people.

Be curious about online life

Ask what young people like or dislike about what they watch online. Learn who their favourite creators are, how they found them and what appeals to them. Share your own online experiences to make it feel like a two-way exchange rather than an interrogation.

TIP: For younger children, try sitting with or near them some of the time while they're playing games or using their devices. Initiate short, light-touch check-ins by asking simple questions like 'What are you watching?' or 'Who is this character?' or 'What's your favourite part of this game?' This gives you opportunities to spot any cause for concern early, and opens the door for further conversation.

Be flexible

Not all young people open up easily, especially boys who are told to be stoic. Try chatting while doing another activity together or even through messages if that feels more comfortable.

Use what's topical

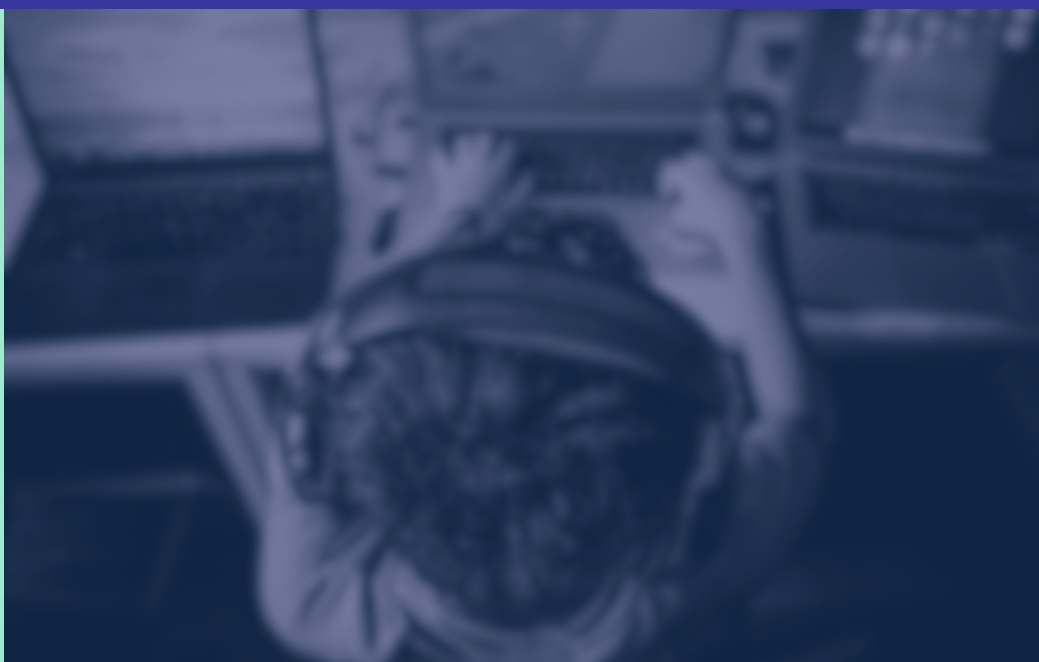
Discuss news stories, online trends or shows they're watching. Ask for their views and share yours. Use these conversations to reinforce values of respect and empathy.

Notice discomfort

Encourage young people to pay attention to when something online feels wrong or uncomfortable. Talk about how to recognise that feeling, including noticing thoughts, emotions and/or body feelings that signal discomfort. Remind them that if they feel uncomfortable about something they've seen online, it's a great idea to check in with a trusted adult.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

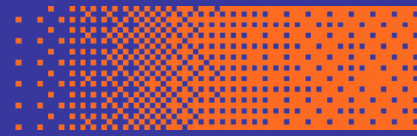
TIP: Younger children might find it easiest to focus on feelings in the body that signal discomfort, such as a tight chest or a churning stomach. Try using story books, films or videos to help them identify examples of these feelings. You could help them plan a simple script for how they would respond in a situation where they felt uncomfortable - for example 'I don't like that. I'm going to leave and find a grown up'.



Reassure safety and keep your cool

Reassure young people that they won't be unfairly punished when they come to you with a problem, even if they've done something wrong. If a young person shares something concerning, show that you can handle it. If you can, avoid anger or panic, but express care and concern. This helps them feel safe to be honest again in the future. If you do find yourself getting stressed or upset, take some time once you've calmed down to explain to your young person why you reacted that way, and reassure them that you're going to help them.

BUILD CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS



Try looking at videos, articles, posts or other content with your young people and working with them to help them critically assess what they're looking at. Try some of the questions below:

OVER 12'S

'What's the main message this person/content is sharing? How would you sum it up in your own words?'

'How can we check whether what they're saying is true? What do you think about the evidence they're using - can we trust it?'

'Why do you think this content has so many likes/comments/shares? What might this person get out of making content like this - money, attention, influence?'

'How do you feel after looking at this? Do you think the person who made it is trying to make you have certain feelings? Why might they do that?'

'Think about somebody who disagrees with this content. What might they say in response to it?'

'How do you think a younger kid might be affected if they saw this? What would they learn from it?'

'What do you think the world would be like if everybody agreed with this person/this content?'

'If you could talk to the person who made this content, what questions would you ask them? What would you want to say to them?'

'What's happening in this video/in this content? Can you tell me in your own words?'

UNDER 12'S

Why do you think they said that/did that? Do you think it's real life, or is it maybe somebody being silly/being dramatic to get people to watch their videos?'

'How do we know whether this is true? If we wanted to check whether it's true, how would we do that?'

'How did it make you feel? Was there any part that made you feel strange or feel worried? How do you think your friend would feel if they watched it?' [Use these conversations to remind children to find a trusted grown up if they see something that makes them feel uncomfortable].

'What would your trusted grown ups think if they saw this video? What do you think they would say about it?'

'Do you think this is a good way to behave/treat others? Why/why not? What would happen if somebody acted like this at your school/play group/youth club?'

'How are the different people in this video feeling? Is anyone being treated unkindly? What could somebody do to help?'

'If you saw something like this on the internet when you're using your device by yourself, what should you do?' [Use these conversations to reinforce agreed strategies about managing online harms, such as finding a trusted grown up, reporting the content etc].

DISCUSS THE BIGGER PICTURE

Lots of young people who encounter manosphere content aren't deliberately looking for it: they may go online because they're searching for community, identity or self-improvement, then find themselves exposed to manosphere content by social media algorithms. Even boys and young men who do deliberately seek out this content may be doing so because they are seeking a sense of belonging. Talking about loneliness, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing can help them find positive alternatives. Offer to help the young people in your life find safe, age-appropriate community - for example, by helping them check out local youth groups, try after-school clubs, or research appropriately moderated online forums.

SUPPORTING GIRLS

We know that girls are increasingly exposed to misogynistic content online too - whether they encounter it directly or through conversations with boys who have absorbed harmful and sexist ideals. As a result, some girls are withdrawing from online spaces altogether, and many are minimising their voices and shrinking their presence in the world.

Adults have a crucial role in helping girls process what they see and hear online by offering support, validation, and opportunities to rebuild confidence, counteracting the impact of harmful content on the minds of girls. The tools outlined in the table above can help facilitate conversations with girls as well as boys, but in addition, the following approaches can provide further support:

Hold Space & Listen Actively: Create a safe and open environment for girls to share how this content makes them feel about themselves and their worth. Rather than jumping straight into solutions or advice, ask questions and allow them to lead the conversation so they can fully explore their emotions

Trust & Validation: Acknowledge and validate their feelings without minimising or dismissing them. Letting them know that their emotions are real and that you believe them helps build trust, ensuring they feel comfortable raising concerns in the future

MANAGE SCREEN TIME REALISTICALLY

Empower & Build: Support girls by strengthening their understanding of gender equality (explored later in this guide), and reinforce their right to safety, respect, and a life free from fear. Remind them that if something makes them feel uncomfortable, that feeling is valid. Encouraging them to trust their instincts and recognise their self-worth will help them challenge and resist harmful messages designed to devalue or dehumanise them

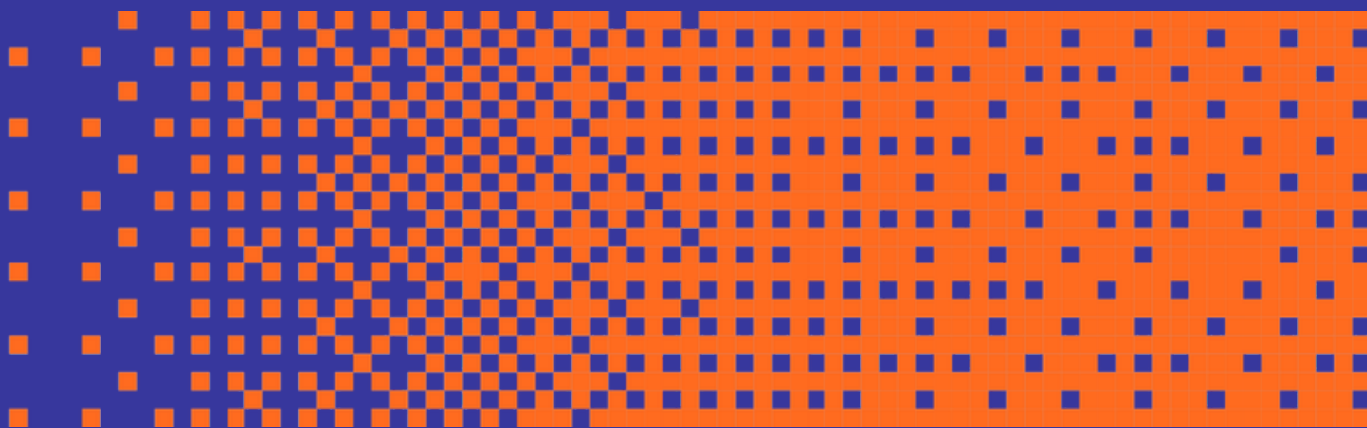
Many young people have to use the internet to complete schoolwork, as well as using it to stay connected to their friends - expecting them to spend long periods of time offline is rarely realistic. Encourage short, regular breaks rather than strict bans - and provide distraction or redirection during screen breaks. Try to avoid taking away devices as punishment: doing this can push young people to hide their online activity.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

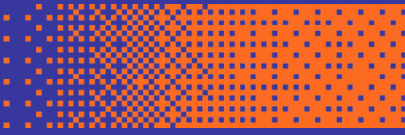
Be clear about what behaviour is unacceptable, such as sharing harmful content or using disrespectful language. Follow through consistently on agreed consequences.

KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP

If you're worried about a young person's online behaviour or wellbeing, there are many places to turn for advice and support. The list below provides a starting point.



4. WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE



HOW TO TALK ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY

Today's young people are frequently exposed to misinformation about gender equality, so it's important to build their understanding of what it truly means and why it benefits everyone. Supporting the rights of girls and women does not disadvantage boys and men. In fact, it creates a healthier and more equal society for all.

Put simply, gender equality is the belief that everyone – women, men, girls and boys, as well as people with non-binary or transgender identities – should have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. It doesn't mean that everyone must be the same, but that the rights and dignity of each person are respected equally.

This includes ensuring equal access to education, jobs, leadership roles and decision-making, as well as the fair sharing of household and caring responsibilities – not placing this burden solely on women and girls. When equality is achieved, families, communities and entire nations thrive.

Starting Conversations with Young People

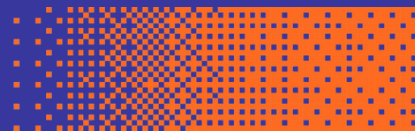
Talking to young people about gender equality can feel daunting, but it's key to tackling the harmful effects of misogyny. The most effective approach is to keep it simple, integrating the topic into everyday conversations, behaviours, and activities.

For younger children, a great way to spark discussion is by looking at a children's book together. For older children, choose a film or TV show they enjoy.

Select something that features gender stereotypes – for example, a classic animated film where a princess needs rescuing or an older sitcom where female characters are often shown in passive or supporting roles while male characters drive the action and narrative – then ask questions like:

- Who are the main characters?
 - Who is active, and who is passive?
 - Who drives the story forward?
- What could be changed to make it fairer?

Tip: For younger children, explore [Awake Not Sleeping](#) – a global collection of modern fairy tales that offers fresh perspectives on courage, kindness and what boys and girls can become



Challenge Gender Stereotypes in Everyday Life

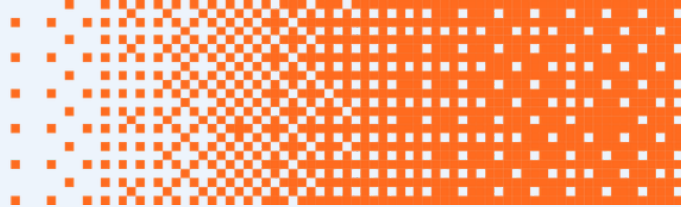
Small changes can make a big difference. Encouraging young people to question outdated or limiting gender roles helps them think critically about the narrow ideals promoted by the manosphere. Here are some simple actions that can help:

- Celebrate women's sport with the same enthusiasm shown for men's events
- Avoid certain phrases like "big boys don't cry", "she's too loud", or "he throws like a girl" that reinforce harmful expectations. Try reframing: instead of "too loud", say "confident". Help boys to process their feelings by holding space for big emotions
- Use inclusive, empowering language praising effort, curiosity and kindness, not just appearance or physical strength
- Choose gender-neutral job titles where possible (e.g. firefighter, police officer)
- Notice who does the chores at home and in class. Are boys always given physical tasks and girls being asked to tidy up? Talk about fairness and rotate responsibilities. Young people pay close attention to who cooks, who cleans and who leads. When roles and responsibilities are shared fairly, the message is clear: everyone contributes, and everyone's time and value matter

Why This Matters

By nurturing open, healthy conversations about gender equality, we help young people become more resilient to harmful online influences. They gain the confidence to challenge restrictive stereotypes and the freedom to express themselves in ways that feel authentic and make them happy.

CONTRIBUTORS & LITERATURE



Authored by Holly Green - Beyond Equality & Atonte Semira - UN Women UK.

Same Side is a campaign from UN Women UK and Vodafone Foundation. This guide was developed in partnership with Beyond Equality.

If you need further support or are concerned about a young person please see the links below:

Talking About Online Life

- Childnet International – Guides and conversation starters for families about digital life and relationships
- childnet.com/parents-and-carers
- Internet Matters – Step-by-step safety advice to help manage online use and discuss harmful content
- internetmatters.org
- Parent Zone – Expert insight on online trends including influencer culture and misogyny
- parentzone.org.uk

Promoting Healthy Relationships

- NSPCC – Resources for talking about respect, consent and healthy relationships
- nspcc.org.uk
- Respect UK – Support for preventing abusive behaviour and promoting positive masculinity
- respect.uk.net

If You're Worried About a Young Person

- CEOP – Report online grooming or unsafe contact
- ceop.police.uk
- Young Minds Helpline – Advice for parents supporting children with anxiety or low mood
- 0808 802 5544
- The Mix – Support for under-25s on any issue
- themix.org.uk

Refuge – 24-hour helpline for anyone experiencing abuse or harassment

0808 2000 247

Samaritans – 24-hour emotional support - 116 123

Published by UN Women National Committee UK
Company Number: 09233969
Charity Number: 1162741
unwomenuk.org