



FORCE FOR GOOD

THERE ARE MANY ANXIETY-INDUCING STORIES ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA, WHICH CAN MAKE GOING ONLINE SEEM LIKE A SCARY PROSPECT. BUT LET'S NOT FORGET JUST HOW INCREDIBLE THE INTERNET IS AND ALL THE POSITIVE BENEFITS IT CAN BRING. HERE'S A REMINDER OF SOME OF THE MANY WAYS YOU CAN GO ONLINE AND ENHANCE YOUR LIFE...

1 CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

It's great to use social media to speak to friends you see all the time – but what's more amazing is connecting with friends and family who live far away who you don't see often. You can use Facetime or Skype to speak to loved ones and take them on a guided tour of your home, let them join you on your holiday, show off your new haircut or wish them a happy birthday with a smile. In just a few seconds, you can connect with anyone around the world. Take time to get in contact with someone you've not spoken to in ages – you'll make their day.

2 CAPTURE THE MOMENT

Using social media sites such as Instagram allows you to upload your favourite photographs and videos to one place and share them with friends and family. Having so many memories in one place is like having a visual diary. Make a point of looking back at them and remembering the fun and interesting times associated with them. It's amazing how quickly things and people change.

3 EXPRESS YOURSELF

Do you have a skill or lots of ideas you think others would like to read about? If so, you can create your own blog to share your opinions on the world or detail a project. You could create it via a site like wordpress.com for a written blog or create your own YouTube channel. Whatever you do, ask a guardian's permission in the first instance and then be careful not to reveal too much personal information. Safety first!

4 RAISING AWARENESS

If you're passionate about a particular cause or charity, look it up online or on Facebook, join a group or create your own to raise awareness. You could even set up an online petition and get friends and family to join your campaign for something you really believe in or that you think needs changing.

5 LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Do you fancy yourself as the next guitar-rocking sensation? Or do you have the urge to throw some yoga shapes or brush up on your artistic skills? One of the many benefits of the internet is the access it provides to millions of YouTube tutorial videos and apps that can help to teach you a skill or develop a talent. Just search for the skill you want to acquire and you're bound to find something to help you. Watch out, world.

6 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

When previous generations wanted homework or revision help, they had to head to the local library and take a book out. Today, it's possible to access millions of websites on every subject online and find the answer to any question you have. You can buy books online and read them instantly or go to sites offering support services for extra help. There are apps covering many school subjects and apps to help you organise your diary (though this will remove any excuses for handing homework in late). You can also go online to check out courses you're interested in or find out what you need to do for certain careers.

7 GETTING SUPPORT

What's particularly helpful for some is the ability to get help and support from others for problems they may feel uneasy talking about openly. For example, if you're struggling with something such as your health or feeling anxious or depressed, there are many sites that can help you with information and advice. There are support sites such as headspace.org.au where you can share your worries with supportive people online anonymously from the privacy of your own home.

8 FUN TIMES

One of the biggest developments in recent years is the increasing number of movies, TV shows, music and games available online. The arrival of the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime and Apple TV has opened up the ability for people to watch back-to-back episodes of their favourite shows whenever they want for a monthly fee. Downloading games, and accessing music online with such apps as Spotify has become much easier, making your favourite pastimes available at your fingertips. One thing is for sure – if you have access to the internet, there's a whole world of opportunity awaiting.



BE KIND ONLINE

WHY YOU SHOULD AVOID GETTING INTO ARGUMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- AND HOW TO HANDLE THE SITUATION IF YOU DO

Ask students or teachers what kind of problems they deal with more than any other and they will tell you two words: social media. While there are many positive and fun things about Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and other apps, when arguments start, they can get very nasty, very quickly. What's more, it's hard to take things back as they can be screen-captured and shared with others quickly.

In comparison to communicating with those you do know, some people find themselves constantly getting into heated debates on internet forums. While arguments face to face are often intense and over quickly, social media arguments can go from bad to worse rapidly. They can also continue for days because of miscommunication of points and the fact some people find they have more courage to say aggressive and hurtful comments behind the safety of a computer or phone.

HERE'S A QUICK GUIDE TO HANDLING ARGUMENTS ONLINE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE...

1 CHOOSE YOUR WORDS - AND YOUR EMOJIS - WISELY

When you have an argument or debate with a person in the same room as you, you get to see facial expressions, body language and hear their tone of voice, so it's easy to see how the other person feels, whereas text messages can easily be misinterpreted. An innocent post can be taken the wrong way so it's really important to choose your words wisely and to think about what punctuation, emojis or gifs you use to accompany it to create the right tone.

2 THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Whether responding to an angry text or an emotive post on a forum, take time before replying when you're annoyed. It's easy to make comments you'll regret when you're upset so try leaving your response for a few hours or speak to someone who you trust and ask their advice on how to reply. A different perspective from someone outside the group can help you see a situation from another angle.

3 STOP THE ARGUMENT

Sometimes you'll have to admit that you'll never agree on a subject and stop the argument, whether it's on a group forum or with a friend. If it's a situation where you can see that you won't be able to change people's opinions, stop responding or just agree to disagree.

4 TALK IT OUT

If it's an argument with a friend, ask to meet to talk to them in person. It takes a brave person to do this, but it's better to resolve the situation quickly. Social media arguments could go on for days, give rise to confusion and cause a lot more anxiety. Perhaps send a text saying, 'Can we meet to sort this out?' or even chat to them on the phone.

5 IGNORE KEYBOARD WARRIORS

A negative aspect of social media is the trolls and aggressive posters who get pleasure from putting up nasty comments. If you fall victim to an anonymous poster's

cruel comments, you can either choose to respond (which is what they want) or ignore them and, if appropriate, report them on the site. The best response is to refuse to communicate with them. They will get bored and (sadly) move on to someone new.

6 SPEAK OUT

If an argument is really bothering you and you can't resolve it, speak to a family member, friend or teacher and tell them how it's affecting you. If it's with a friend, a trusted adult might be able to mediate between the pair of you, and if it's with a stranger, they should be able to advise you how to handle it.

7 RESIST THE URGE

If someone is making snide comments on an internet forum, why worry about them? They don't know you and you'll probably never meet them. Just try to accept that while they may seem wrong, there are more important things to worry about than a stranger with opposing ideas.