

Debunking the 'Momo Challenge' – 6 Tips For Parents Dealing With Scaremongering 'Suicide Games'

The latest internet craze may not exist at all – but it doesn't stop it terrifying children.

By Victoria Richards

Parents have been urged to talk to their children about the alleged existence of disturbing online 'suicide games' that encourage young people to hurt themselves – and each other.

These 'games' sweep the globe, alongside scaremongering images, warnings and links to reported deaths. We've all heard of '[Slender Man](#)' and the '[Blue Whale Challenge](#)' – fictional characters linked to stabbings, self-harm and suicide. They can present a bit like old-fashioned 'chain letters', only with a cyber-bully twist – and it can be hard to know whether they're real, where they come from and what to do about it.

The latest of these, characterised by the disturbing image of a black-haired, bug-eyed woman with grotesquely-distorted features, appears to be the 'Momo Challenge'. 'Momo' first came to light last summer, after being supposedly linked to a number of deaths in Argentina, Columbia and India.

These links have never been proven, but the game – which is apparently played on social messaging platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, and relies on a user messaging an unknown number and receiving increasingly dangerous tasks – has hit the headlines again this week after a seven-year-old told school friends the 'Momo' character would "kill them".

he child's teacher alerted his parents after the boy "made threats" to other children at a primary school in Westhoughton, Bolton, according to the [Manchester Evening News](#).

The mum of the seven-year-old then posted a warning to the local '[Love Westhoughton](#)' Facebook group (the post has since been removed), in which she said she was "deeply alarmed" to find out her son had made three children cry by telling them 'Momo' was going to "go into their room at night and kill them". She said he had been told about the challenge by other children.

"I have one very frightened little boy and some deep concerns about the kids in his school," she said. "Parent controls are as tight as can be and this still slips through." The mum, who didn't want to be identified according to the newspaper, advised other parents to talk to their children to "open up a dialogue about idiots online and try to get ahead of this".

According to [The Sun](#), the 'Momo' avatar was originally created by a Japanese special effects company called Link Factory, without any links to online games – and was on display in a Tokyo fetish museum in 2016.

If you're a parent, you'll undoubtedly worry about the effects of the rumours about 'Momo'. And whether it's real or not, it can still be extremely scary for your kids. So, what do you do about it? Here are six ideas:

Do Your Research

According to Adele Jennings, who writes the [Our Family Life blog](#), which has been shared by the website [Internet Matters](#), online games and social media companies need to do more, but as parents we have to "find out and learn more about what our children are getting up to while online". So, do your research, as much as you are able. Find out what your child is looking at, and judge for yourself if it's appropriate.

Talk To Your Child

“Only by talking to them, and knowing how to block and report inappropriate content can we start to make a difference, but we have to do our homework,” Jennings writes. If you’re struggling to work out how to have that conversation, look at [Thinkuknow](#). The website is connected to police and CEOP and offers advice that’s targeted appropriately to the age of your child.

Take Them Seriously

If your child is scared, it can be counterproductive to dismiss those fears and risk invalidating their feelings. It doesn’t matter if the fear is real or proportionate, if it’s scaring your child, it’s worth listening – really listening. And sometimes, if they feel heard, they’ll feel better. [CforCat](#) – a platform dedicated to early childhood development – advises acknowledging their feelings, giving them permission to feel that way and inviting them to discuss what they’re thinking about.

Understand Technology

It can be hard keeping up with which app, game or social messaging service your kids are using. If you want the latest on the latest technology, consider checking out [parentzone](#) – the experts on family digital life. There are sections ranging from explaining the game Fortnite, to what game age ratings really mean and how to achieve a digital detox.

Make Informed Decisions

If you care about gender stereotyping, or want to weed out content that depicts violence or bad language, check out [Common Sense Media](#). It watches online media and content for you, and provides advice, reviews and trigger warnings.

Report Any Serious Risk of Harm

Take a look at the [CEOP online safety centre](#). You can [make a report](#) to one of CEOP’s Child Protection Advisors if you are worried about online sexual abuse, or the way someone has been communicating with your child online.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/debunking-the-momo-challenge-6-tips-on-how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-scaremongering-suicide-games_uk_5c700160e4b03cfdaa54604d?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmluZy5jb20vc2VhcmNoP3E9dGhIK2IvbW8rY2hhbGxlbmdlJmZvcn09RURHRUFSJnFzPVBGJmN2aWQ9MTMwYjY0NGUzOTUzNDIIZjgIZjYwYjllZjgxZTRkMzUmY2M9VVMmc2V0bGFuZzIibiIVUyZEUQYwPTEmcGx2YXI9MA&guce_referrer_cs=yyAch8BakX6UgquOrvKTSA