At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

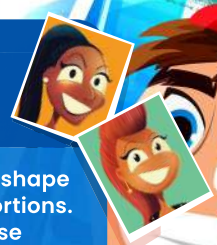
What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

IMAGE-ALTERING FILTERS

From playful puppy ears on Snapchat to 'beauty mode' on TikTok, image-altering filters are now a routine part of how young people communicate online. While many are harmless, others subtly reshape people's faces and bodies. This can blur the line between reality and edited content, potentially influencing how children and young people see themselves and others.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ALTERED BEAUTY STANDARDS



Many 'beauty' filters smooth skin, reshape facial features, or adjust body proportions. Over time, repeated exposure to these filters can shift a child's idea of what is 'normal' or attractive, creating unrealistic expectations about their own and others' appearances.

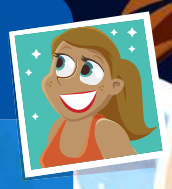
HIDDEN ADVERTISING



Some filters are linked to beauty products or trends, subtly promoting third-party brands. Children and young people may not recognise this as advertising, while also sharing personal data – such as facial images and usage habits – with apps and third parties.

PRESSURE TO LOOK PERFECT





Filtered images can often attract more 'likes' and positive comments. This can encourage children and young people to rely on editing tools to gain others' approval, rather than feeling confident in their natural appearance.

BLURRED REALITY



As filters become more advanced and natural-looking, it can be difficult for children and young people to distinguish edited content from real life, especially when filters are used in everyday photos and videos.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM



Regularly viewing heavily filtered content can lead to comparisons with unrealistic images. This is linked to body dissatisfaction and reduced self-esteem, particularly among children and teenagers.

SEXUALISED EDITS



Certain tools can make users appear older or more sexualised. This may attract unwanted attention, increase the risk of images being shared without consent, and expose young people to unsafe interactions.

Advice for Parents & Educators

START OPEN CONVERSATIONS



Talk regularly about filters, such as how they work and why people use them. Ask the children and young people in your care how filtered images make them feel and encourage honest discussion without judgement.

CHALLENGE 'PERFECT' POSTS



When viewing content together, gently point out the signs of editing, filters, or posing techniques. This builds critical thinking and helps children and young people question unrealistic images.

REINFORCE WHAT'S REAL



Help children and young people understand that filtered images are digitally altered and are not an accurate reflection of real life. Emphasise that they don't need to meet these artificial standards.

PROMOTE OFFLINE CONFIDENCE



Encourage activities that build self-worth beyond appearance, such as sports, hobbies, friendships, and creative interests, so that confidence isn't tied solely to online validation.

Meet Our Expert



Parven Kaur is a digital parenting expert and founder of Kids N Clicks, a platform dedicated to helping parents navigate the online world alongside their children. She is an expert contributor for Internet Matters, offering practical guidance on emerging online safety issues. Her insights have been featured by the BBC, The Telegraph, TalkTV, and other major media outlets, supporting families across the UK.

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