Social media is impacting on our relationships which can make it harder for parents and teachers to relate to today's teens. One parent commented to me " It can often feel as if we are being taken over by and pushed to the side in favour of a screen"

As adults, we need to assert ourselves into the digital lives of the children in our care. Our role is to help and guide them but to do this we must be prepared to learn about the digital environment our young people inhabit and understand how they behave and feel within it. Without this our adolescents will have difficulty trusting our judgement and allowing us to help them navigate the inevitable pitfalls and challenges of the ever-evolving online world.

Adults go online - teens live online!

Psychotherapist Holli Rubin is a prominent body-image specialist and has contributed on this important issue to governmental organisations, public forums and print, radio, and television media outlets. Her insight and experience is helping drive change at a national level regarding body image education. Here she gives a brief insight into how the online environment is impacting upon body image among young people:

A 10-year-old girl is uncomfortable with the physical changes puberty is bringing on. She doesn't want to grow up and dislikes her changing body. She calls herself fat and refuses to change into her bathing suit in front of the other girls. This clouds her whole day and she can't concentrate on her studies.

A 17-year-old art student cannot manage to motivate herself to complete her final term project. She cuts and dies her hair and makes herself up differently. She presents herself differently in order to break away from the old self who she feels cannot manage anymore. Her sadness and frustration remain however and she stops going into school and pulls away from friends.

How teens understand their changing selves and their identity is complicated by their constant absorption of online material. Some studies suggest that adolescents are spending up to eight hours a day online. Their use of the internet is very different from that of their parents which is where much of the disconnect begins. Adults go online, teens live online - and the way they process the information that they are absorbing, both consciously and unconsciously, is complicated.

The teenage years see enormous amounts of both physical and emotional change and these changes are not always welcome, especially among girls. Developing new body parts, growing hair on existing ones and suffering from ugly red zits can all be very challenging. Children are getting bigger, taller and looking older yet they are often not feeling ready to be living in this developing body, to handle what it means to be grown up. To begin to look like adults means that they will need to begin to act like them and that can be intimidating and frightening.

As a boy or girl entering puberty with all its accompanying changes, most are bound to feel uncomfortable within their body at some point or another, and sensitive to being judged. The number one reason for bullying is physical appearance however, today's digital generation unwittingly place themselves in vulnerable situations. Via Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook they post numerous images which are open to judgement and critique. Some young people are so consumed with the number of 'likes' their selfie gets, that should it not achieve a "good rating" they delete it. Furthermore, the ability to create a flawless, perfected, and yet artificial, digital identity using online filter apps can often inevitably lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness with your real self.

Whilst teen boys and girls are not necessarily aware of the impact of their online lives on their overall wellbeing, the signs are often there to see. Today's teens are more aware of their image than ever before. The pressure for them to look and act in a certain way is being delivered 24/7 and if they don't feel that they fit into a narrowly defined beauty ideal being portrayed online, this can impact on their self-esteem and manifest itself in many different ways: their academic studies, extracurricular activities, friendships and relationships can all be affected. Sometimes things can get so serious that they find self-destructive ways of coping such as self-harming and in extreme cases suicidal thoughts and even attempts at suicide.