

DEFEATING THE BLUE WHALE CHALLENGE

Dear Parents,

In the recent past there have been many reports in India highlighting the death of innocent children who have attempted the **Blue Whale Challenge** and thus prompted us to write to you and spread awareness.

What is the Blue Whale game?

The Blue Whale Challenge is an online game in which participants follow a social media account, which instructs them to complete 50 disturbing challenges. Challenges may start with watching a horror movie to actions causing extreme harm.

What can you do to protect children? Tips for Parents:-

- ✓ Ask your child what they are doing online. It's important you understand what websites, apps, and social media platforms they are on. Check their privacy settings. Make sure they know how to make their profiles 'private'
- ✓ Make sure they know when and how to report and block any malicious or inappropriate messages or posts.
- ✓ Ask your child to avoid sharing images online or sending pictures or videos to friends
- ✓ Have regular conversations with your children about the risks they may be exposed to and how to deal with them, such as cyber bullying. Ensure they feel comfortable to come and talk to you if they see anything upsetting
- ✓ Try to find out the reason behind any unnatural behaviour. For example, a disturbed stomach could be a sign of anxiety.
- ✓ Talk to your child for 20 minutes every day without interrupting them.

First, know the warning signs:

When our children are going through distress, they send out warning signs through their behaviour. Look out for these signs.

1. Displaying out-of character behaviour
2. Injuries that is unexplained
3. Sudden changes in appearance, interests or habits.
4. Rebellious/ aggressive behaviour
5. Extended absence/ deliberate social withdrawal
6. Sending/ posting moody or morbid messages (including expressions of death)

What you can do as a parent.

1. Talk to your children about their thoughts and feelings:

Start with some questions to show concern for your child's well-being, such as, "I noticed that you... Is there anything you would like to share?" or "Is there something troubling you?" Listen to them. Be caring and kind.

2. Don't be afraid to ask your child direct questions.

Contrary to what we may think, asking them direct questions does not put the idea in their head but invites them to share what they are feeling without stigma or shame. If you suspect your child is in danger, get help immediately from a Counsellor.

3. Encourage a healthy lifestyle and a wide range of coping strategies.

Encourage your child to develop a sleeping routine to help them get a good night's sleep. Physical activities can help relieve stress. Other coping strategies include talking with people they trust, keeping a journal, drawing and expressing themselves through art, practising relaxation and deep breathing.

4. Encourage your child to be a positive influence

You can also encourage your child to be a voice of hope and positive influence for his/her peers. Your child can play his/her part to look out for warning signs if a peer is distressed or at risk of suicide. Encourage your child to refer the friend immediately to a trusted adult for help.

THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE

With regards,

DPS HARNI
