



NORTH AMERICAN CENTRE FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT & TRAUMA RESPONSE

3049 – 34th Street, Lethbridge, AB., T1H 7C4 - Tel: (403) 394-9468
Fax: (403) 388-0454 - www.cctatr.com



SAFER SCHOOLS TOGETHER

14788 Russell Avenue, White Rock, BC., V4B 2P2 - Tel: (604) 560-2285
www.saferschoolstogether.com

ALERT

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MOMO Challenge

We are receiving numerous calls with questions and concerns regarding the Momo Challenge which has resurfaced on multiple social media platforms. The Momo Challenge first started in 2016 on a mobile instant messaging application called Whatsapp. A phone number associated with the name Momo and a picture of a girl with bulging eyes and widespread mouth would use a feature of the app called 'Quick Add' where the app would allow the user to add and message multiple numbers in a short period of time to then send messages back and forth with any individual who was willing to respond.

The nature of the messages usually start out innocent such as "wanna play a game?" which can then evolve into Momo encouraging the child to engage in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. The motive to follow through with the challenge is that Momo tells the child that they know where they live (the address can typically be found through reverse search of the phone number) along with their parent's name, which is generally connected to the phone number. This can escalate to threats towards family and or loved ones if they do not follow through with the challenge or if they contact local authorities.

Recently the Momo Challenge has reappeared in multiple YouTube videos that are specifically intended for younger audiences. Typically, the Momo Challenge will be featured in videos (such as Peppa Pig, Paw Patrol, Minecraft gameplay) that come from new or unreliable YouTube accounts and begins 5-10 minutes into the episode, after attempting to establish as a legitimate video. Parents/Caregivers should carefully monitor what their children watch on YouTube and only allow them to watch trusted channels.

Online challenges such as the Momo Challenge unfortunately do circulate quite regularly. Parents should not overreact; however, it is important that they speak with their children regarding all aspects of their online activity and explain potential risk of using certain streaming platforms so that they can recognize dangerous online behaviour. If you have concerns about your children accessing Youtube, please be aware that you are able to block Youtube from your internet router

<https://www.wikihow.com/Block-Unwanted-Site-From-Your-Router>.

Students should be encouraged to report concerning online behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable to a trusted adult or through the anonymous erase|Report It tool at <https://erasereportit.gov.bc.ca/add/report-it>

List of some Approved Youtube Channels:

- Ryan ToysReview https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChGJGhZ9SOOHvBB0Y4DOO_w
- Blippi <https://www.youtube.com/user/BlippiVideos>
- The Axel Show <https://www.youtube.com/user/theaxelshowadventure>
- CookieSwirlC <https://www.youtube.com/user/CookieSwirlC>
- Toys Unlimited <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzIdYMdAtTsWucGCZyZvN6w>
- Peppa Pig – Official Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/theofficialpeppa>

Caution should be utilized if children have access to Youtube on their mobile devices.

Alternatively, many streaming apps such as Netflix have Kid Friendly functions that can be turned on to allow children to browse and stream videos without being exposed to inappropriate content.

Depending on your school community, you may want to consider putting some messaging out to parents/caregivers so they are aware of the Momo Challenge and have an idea of how to address this with their children.

Key Reminders:

1. It is essential to stay vigilant when receiving reports of any students exhibiting “worrisome behaviours” especially those students who may be struggling at this time.
2. Be aware that if there is a shift in the behavioural baseline of a student it is important to collect data in collaboration with local support agencies and conduct other assessments as required.
3. Pay close attention to individuals who seem fixated on the Momo Challenge.
4. The role that social media plays as both a risk enhancer as well as a prominent contributing source of data has never been stronger. A comprehensive review of the individual’s online behaviour and digital footprint is where we find the most information. An accurate risk determination cannot be made without reviewing the entirety of their digital baseline.
5. We collectively, staff, parents/ caregivers, need to “strategically” intensify our connections with our children who may be vulnerable to engaging in the Momo Challenge. The power of positive, meaningful human connection is one of the best prevention strategies we can utilize.

Sincerely,

Theresa Campbell, M.A.
President, Safer Schools Together Ltd.

J. Kevin Cameron, M.Sc., R.S.W., B.C.E.T.S., B.C.S.C.R.
Board Certified Expert in Trauma Stress
Diplomate, American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress
Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response