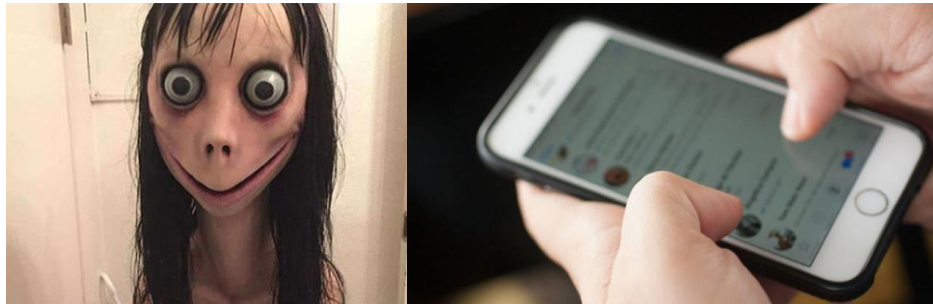




Subject: ADVISORY ON "MOMO CHALLENGE GAME"

Parents, Beware



It is reported in the media that there is new online challenge game (it's called game, but actually a suicide mission) called **"the Momo Challenge"** which started on Facebook where members are "challenged" to Communicate with unknown numbers . It went viral on social media platforms, especially WhatsApp.

The Momo Challenge, which is a form of cyber bullying, consists of a variety of self-harming dares which becomes increasingly risky as the game progresses and it finally ends with suicide challenge. The game involves challenges that encourage teenagers/ children / any other user to engage in series of violent acts as challenges of the game.

The game forces teenagers/ children / any other user (the player), to add unknown contacts on WhatsApp by the name of 'Momo'. Once the contact is added, the image of the terrifying Japanese 'Momo' doll with bulging eyes appears in contact. The game controller then entices player to perform a series of challenges and playing the game are threatened with violent images, audios or videos, if player do not follow instructions.

Ministry of Electronics & IT (Cyber Laws & e-Security Group) has issued an advisory for parents, to keep their children safe.

Advisory to parents

- Check in with your child, ask how things are going. Ask if there have been things stressing them, or anything that has them worried. If your child is talking about any level of distress, do not hesitate to ask them about changes in mental health.
- Unless there is reason to believe your child already knows of or has played the game, don't discuss about the Blue Whale game. By doing so, you increase the chance that your child will search for it on their own.
- Monitor your children's online & social media activity to ensure they are not engaging with this game.
- Keep your eyes open for:
 - a) Unusually secretive behaviour, mostly related to their online activity
 - b) A sudden increase in the time they spend online, especially social media
 - c) They seem to change screens on their device when approached
 - d) They become withdrawn or angry, after using the internet or sending text messages
 - e) Their device suddenly has many new phone numbers and email contacts
- Install a good cyber/mobile parenting software which helps them in monitoring your children.
- Parents should take reports from teachers and counsellor present in the school at regular intervals.
- If you fear your child may be at risk, get professional help right away.
- Remind your child that you are there and will support them as they face life challenges.

Symptoms to watch out for:

- Becoming withdrawn from friends and family
- Persistent low mood and unhappiness
- Looking worried that stops him/her from carrying out day to day tasks
- Sudden outbursts of anger directed at themselves or others
- Loss of interest in activities that they used to enjoy
- Visible marks like deep cuts or wounds on any part of the body of the child

What if the child is already playing the “Momo Challenge”?

According to Ministry of Education, Singapore, here’s a breakdown of the safety tips:

1. **Know the symptoms to watch out for.** Keep an eye on your children for signs of distress, like out-of-character behaviour, aggressiveness, social withdrawal, anxiety, or fear.
2. **Talk about your child’s feelings.** Talk to your child with a smile. You have to make them feel safe confiding in you. Ask them calmly what the problem is and if you can help.
3. **Educate your children about the dangers.** Let your child know that suicide won’t benefit anyone, and that it will only hurts their loved ones. Listening to Momo’s instructions won’t do anyone good: It will just cause people to get hurt.
4. **Stand by their side in this challenge.** Assure him or her that “Momo” doesn’t exist, and that it’s okay to refuse instructions or go against peer pressure. If your child is too scared, say that you’ll stand by their side no matter what happens.
5. **Don’t be afraid to ask your child direct questions if they’ve done anything dangerous or had a scary experience.** Open up a healthy discussion with questions like “Have you ever been scared by someone recently?”
6. **Monitor their behaviour and actions constantly:** Make sure that they are away from any danger and that they do not indulge any behaviour of self-harm.
7. **Take action:** Block all the numbers related to “momo challenge”. You can also file a police report against it. Consult a paediatrician or a psychologist if your child had a traumatic experience.

References:

- (a) <http://infosecawareness.in/family/>
- (b) <https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-momo-challenge-5302916/>
- (c) <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preveting-absue/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parentalcontrols/>
- (d) <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en-GB>
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