

## Information on the Momo Challenge

The “Momo Challenge” has rapidly gained attention on social media and through many local news stations in recent weeks. The Momo Challenge center on a character called Momo that appears on the internet and encourages youth to complete tasks that could harm them. The recent reports on social media and local news stations state that the Momo character interrupts YouTube videos and YouTube Kids videos with a directive to complete a harmful task, like putting a metal object in an electric outlet. Then the child is instructed to send a photo as evidence that the task is completed. The directive also comes with a threatening message that something bad will happen if they do not complete the task. This is not the first time the Momo character has appeared online. The Momo Challenge was first reported on the WhatsApp a year ago and has appeared online in other countries. Despite reports, there is little evidence of the Momo Challenge actually disrupting videos on YouTube. YouTube released the following statement:

*“We want to clear something up regarding the Momo Challenge: We’ve seen no recent evidence of videos promoting the Momo Challenge on YouTube. Videos encouraging harmful and dangerous challenges are against our policies.”*

The character itself was created by an artist in Japan in 2016 as a sculpture, not intended to be used to cause harm. The image of the character is quite creepy and could scare any child. Unfortunately, youth can be exposed to many scary images and harmful situations online. A similar challenge, called the Blue Whale Challenge, surfaced last year, which ended up being deemed a hoax. The scenario was very similar to the present. Children were encouraged to complete harmful tasks and provide evidence of completion. The challenge quickly gained attention online creating fear in parents that want to keep their children safe online.

This will likely not be the last challenge or harmful message youth will be exposed to online, which serves as an important reminder that adults need to help youth be safe online. It is important to understand that there will always be risks online. There are ways that parents can keep their children safe online from any potential threat and that begins with communication. Explain to your child that if they see something scary or something that makes them uncomfortable that they need to report it to an adult. Provide reassurance that not everything online is real and that adults can help. Parents are encouraged to monitor internet use and utilize parental control and privacy settings. However, parental controls are not a catch all. It is recommended to continue to monitor internet use and check controls periodically. Additional information is provided below.

Resources:

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/resources/platform-guides/momo-online-safety-guide-for-parents/>

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-parental-controls>

<https://www.connectsafely.org/security/>

Common Sense Media and Connect Safely have numerous resources available on their websites. These two articles are specific to security and have been included for your convenience. You are encouraged to explore other areas of their website.

References:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/02/momo-challenge-hoax/583825/>

<https://www.today.com/video/-momo-challenge-how-to-protect-kids-from-disturbing-internet-game-1449768003504>

<https://www.1011now.com/content/news/The-Momo-challenge-Its-probably-just-a-hoax-506442921.html>

School Community Intervention and Prevention

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