



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

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## Know! Momo and her Deadly Challenge to our Youth



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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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In the past, Prevention Action Alliance shared information on a dangerous internet game called the *Blue Whale Challenge*. It involves acts of self-harm and ultimately, to win the game is to take one's own life. ([Click here](#) for the full Know! Tip on the Blue Whale Challenge). Another similar game is now trending throughout social media and is said to be impacting lives in multiple countries around the world – it is called the *Momo Challenge*. Just like the Blue Whale Challenge, there is a game administrator that lures a victim into participating in challenges that include self-harm, with the endgame being suicide.

In this challenge, the leader's name is Momo and her avatar is a scary-looking woman with dark, scraggly hair, bulging eyes and a giant, creepy smile. Momo is known to hack into users' cell phones. Those who engage with her are then sent disturbing and graphic photos, and are made to perform acts of self-harm, including suicide, or face the consequences of having their secrets and private information shared online.

Some are calling it an internet hoax, while others claim it is linked to teen deaths in their perspective countries. Currently, no teen deaths have been officially connected to this so-called "game" in the U.S. However, there is apparently enough merit to it that U.S. law enforcement agencies have begun issuing warnings for parents to talk

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with their children about the deadly risks of partaking in this challenge – should they be contacted by “Momo.”

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We spoke with suicide prevention experts Shawna Hite-Jones and Austin Lucas from the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to ask about this potentially deadly game and find out what information we should be sharing with the young people in our lives on this topic.

***Q. What are your thoughts on the Momo Challenge? And do you see this being a teachable moment for our youth?***

*A. It absolutely is a teachable moment whether we are looking at it as a hoax or not. There have been some cases linked to it (Momo Challenge), but not definitively in terms of suicide deaths. It is trending in news media as well as social media, so it is important for us to use the opportunity to have some positive conversation with the youth in our lives, whether you're a parent or you work with youth. It's not that we need to get into depth about the game and its content, but really using it as an opportunity to say to them, "If you're ever struggling or having thoughts of self-harm, know you're not the only youth that has had those thoughts. No matter the circumstance, we want you to tell us, and we want to know because there is help out there." It's about using it as an opportunity to talk about what mental health is, what self-harm is, making sure they know you really care, and letting them know that they can come to you if they are ever struggling.*

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 12-24, second only to accidental death; and for every suicide, there are 100-200 suicide attempts. This is a vital topic we must be discussing, and revisiting regularly, with our youth.

In the tip to follow, we continue the conversation with experts from the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation to learn about the risk and protective factors of suicide, who may be at greater risk, and the warning signs to look out for.

In the meantime, if you feel your child is considering self-harm or experiencing suicidal thoughts, please connect with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255, or go to <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> for information or to chat online with a professional. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

Source: [Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Suicide rates rising across the U.S., 2018.](#) [James Rogers, Fox New: Sinister 'Momo suicide challenge' sparks fear as it spreads on WhatsApp, Aug. 2018.](#)