Communicating Digitally

Communicating digitally - whether online or over the phone - is different than in-person in a lot of ways. Understanding why and how is important when considering how to interact with your mentee digitally.

This lesson and the next are both there to give you an awareness of how communicating digitally affects us - and any human being - on an emotional and physical level and the ways that this can affect effective communication with your young person.

**Don't be discouraged though - digital communication plays an important part in mentoring and can be immensely impactful as it helps provide consistency during times of change.**

Be aware that these affect not just your young person, but also you!

Consider that:

* Communicating digitally **deprives us a full sensory experience** as we are only limited to audio and/or visual experiences or, when messaging, just text. We also **don’t have a full understanding of the context the other person is in**. This can make the experience quite **lonely**.
* When we communicate through video call, even when the connection is excellent, there is a**1.2 second delay**.  This makes us perceive that the other person is less friendly or focused.
* **Silence** on calls (whether with or without video) often makes us anxious compared to natural pauses that happen during in-person communication.
* **Hyper self-awareness** occurs when we are forced to view our own faces while we are interacting with others. We are not used to conversations with another person while we are staring in a mirror and it can make us feel self-conscious.  This can distract us from being in the moment with that other person,  as if there is a wall between us and others.
* At the same time, there is “non-verbal overload” because video calls require us to engage in **behaviour ordinarily reserved for very close relationships**—such as long stretches of seeing close ups of each other's faces or having to maintain "eye" contact for extended periods of time.
* **Social anxiety** can be an issue for some because we are sharing what our homes look and/or sound like. However, others might find that communicating digitally alleviates their anxieties linked to the outside world.
* Because we are **not in full view of each other** compared to face-to-face sessions, it is harder to pay attention because we are **tempted to multi-task**
* There's a**loss of shared physical cues** created by shared surroundings (e.g. a park or café) which mean that you share sensory experiences such as the wind or a smell and that you other things to look at besides each other’s faces.