

# Online risks are routine for teens, most bounce back

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Pamela Wisniewski, an assistant professor in engineering at UCF, studies teens and their online lives. Credit: UCF, College of Engineering

Teens routinely encounter online risks, such as sexual solicitations, cyberbullying and explicit material, but research shows that the negative effects of such exposure appear to be temporary, vanishing for most teens in less than a week.

A new study from the University of Central Florida, Pennsylvania State and Ohio State found that typical teens seem to be resilient and cope with most online risks, moving beyond the temporary negative impacts quickly.

The researchers conducted a web-based diary study of 68 teens. They chronicled the teens' online experiences for eight weeks and used pre-validated psychological scales to assess how negative online [experiences](#) impacted teens' emotional state and well-being. While they found that teens reported more negative emotions during the weeks they experienced cyberbullying and explicit content, these effects were gone only a week later. The findings will be presented at the 2018 conference on Computer-Supported

Cooperative Work and Social Computing next year.

"I think if there is a message here, it is that teens are being exposed a lot, but they bounce back and show resiliency," said Bridget McHugh, who worked on the study while a Ph.D student at UCF and is now a leadership development consultant at Ohio State University. "We're not exactly sure how they are learning the coping skills, but they are and that's good news."

McHugh said coping may be happening through other online interactions with friends or through support from social media communities.

Pamela Wisniewski, a computer science assistant professor at UCF in Orlando, and co-author of the study, concluded that more research needs to be conducted into how teens learn to cope in the constantly changing [social media](#) world.

"I know parents are afraid of all the dangers out there, especially because teens seem to be practically tethered to the internet with their mobile devices," she said. "But we may be over problematizing online risks and creating another stressor for teens and parents. What we should be looking at is, what does this all mean for the everyday teen?"

"We absolutely acknowledge there are cases where teens experience severe online risks, such as cyberbullying, that lead to long-term negative outcomes, like committing suicide," Wisniewski said. "These are terrible, but they are also extreme cases. The [good news](#) is that in our study, we found that these extreme scenarios aren't the average [teen](#) experience."

She suggests parents help their children learn to manage [risk](#), and that can't happen if there isn't open communication. But that's a challenge when it comes to the topic of online activity. In another study, Wisniewski found that teens don't

communicate about all the risks they encounter online because [parents](#) tend to overreact.

Provided by University of Central Florida

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