

Emojis - Hidden meanings

Emojis are widely used across all ages in digital communication, adding humour and emphasis.

For young people, they can create a code to conceal true intentions from adults.

While some meanings may be harmless, others can signal risks such as extremism, drugs, sexual interactions, and bullying.

A list of emojis used in dangerous contexts is below:

	The red pill is linked to incel, or ‘involuntarily celibate’ culture, where misogynistic and extremist views are prevalent. The meaning originates from The Matrix films but has been adopted by the manosphere to represent those who see the ‘real truth’ in the world.
	The blue pill is used in incel culture to represent the opposite of the red pill – those who are blind to the real truth and adhere to more mainstream views about gender dynamics.
	The 100 emoji is used in relation to incel culture. It represents the idea promoted by those in the manosphere that 80% of women are attracted to 20% of men.
	The dynamite emoji is used in incel culture to represent the exploding red pill, in other words, breaking out of societal norms and myths.
	The kidney beans emoji is tied to incel culture. It is thought to represent coffee beans, which link back to a series of memes mocking women.
	The plug emoji can be used to mean drug dealer, also known as a person’s “plug”.
	The snowflake, nose and petrol pump emojis are all used to represent the drug cocaine.
	The horse emojis can be used to represent the drug ketamine.
	Skull, alien and devil emojis may represent the drug ecstasy.
	The balloon emoji may be used to represent the drug nitrous oxide.
	Camera emojis can represent a request for nude/explicit images or videos.
	Peach, aubergine and cherry emojis can all be used to represent body parts in a sexual context.
	The sweat emoji may also be used in a sexual context.
	The face with no mouth emoji can convey the message “Do not tell anybody”. It may be used in a bullying context or when sharing inappropriate, illegal or sensitive information.
	The frog emoji can mean “You’re ugly”. It is used in bullying or harassment contexts.
	Heart emojis can mean different things depending on the colour used. The red heart usually means love.
	The purple heart can be used to convey attraction or sexual desire.
	The yellow heart may mean “I’m interested, are you interested?”
	The pink heart can mean “I’m interested but not in sex.”
	An orange heart is more likely to be platonic, and means “You’re going to be fine.”



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What to do if you are concerned:

When monitoring emojis in digital interactions, context is crucial; their use alone doesn't indicate harm. Understanding emojis alongside other risk markers is essential.

Teen language and emoji meanings evolve rapidly, so staying updated on slang can help identify safeguarding risks.

Engaging in regular, non-judgemental discussions with young people about their online experiences fosters openness and strengthens digital safety education.

If you are worried about a child at risk, you can help by:

TALK TO THEM AND LISTEN

There are many factors to consider to protect them and keep them safe. However, it's crucial that they feel they're able to talk to you, or to another trusted adult.

Speak to them honestly about the consequences of any dangerous or illegal behaviour – they might not realise how they could be liable or could have been lied to.

However, make sure that they still feel comfortable talking to you about what is worrying them.

ENCOURAGE CHANGE

You can encourage children and young people to get involved in positive activities in school and in the local community such as sports and clubs.

Talk to children about their aspirations for the future and find school programs or apprenticeships that will help them to get there as it's important they feel like they have other options.

Talk to children about how to cope with pressure and how to deal with conflict.

Lead by example and role model positive, appropriate behaviours so that they see a different way

ASK FOR SUPPORT

If you're concerned about a child being exploited, the sooner the police and relevant agencies are made aware the better.

You can contact the **NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000** and speak to trained professionals about what is happening, who can take action and to be signposted to the right services in your area.

Contact the police immediately if you think a child is in danger – Emergency **999**, non-emergency **101**, online **kent.police.uk**

Contact Children's Services via your local council – **Kent County Council 03000 41 11 11** or **Medway Council 01634 334 466**

Useful websites:

NSPCC facts & resources around Child Criminal Exploitation – nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe

Barnardo's children and family support – barnardos.org.uk/get-support

KidsOnlineworld.com free online safety guides – kidsonlineworld.com/shareables



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