

ADVISORY TO THE PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Blue Whale Challenge: What Parents Need to Know

a) ***What is the Blue Whale Challenge and why should parents be concerned about this game?***

1. The Blue Whale challenge is an online game. The game is named so because sometimes whales beach themselves intentionally and die.
2. In this game, an online administrator assigns tasks to its participants. The participants are given a period of 50 days to complete each task. The players are expected to take photos of them undertaking the challenge and upload them as proofs for the curator's approval. The last challenge is to commit suicide. Players of this game cannot stop playing because they are blackmailed and cyber bullied into completing the game.
3. This deadly game has spread all over the globe, and in India there have been reports of children harming themselves and in a few cases even committing suicides, which are allegedly linked to Blue Whale Challenge. More than six children across India in the age group of 12-19 years have taken their lives allegedly playing this game within a span of two weeks.

b) ***Where can children access this game?***

Blue Whale is not a freely downloadable game, application or software. Children cannot access it on their smartphones through app stores or on social media platforms like Facebook. It is shared among secretive groups on social media networks. The creators seek out their players/victims and send them an invitation to join.

c) ***What kind of challenges do the players face in this game?***

Some of the challenges in this game are listed below. It may not be a standard list of challenges and it is possible that curators of the game may come up with new ones.

1. Carve with a razor “f57” on your hand, send a photo to the curator.
2. Wake up at 4.20 a.m. and watch psychedelic and scary videos that curator sends you.
3. Cut your arm with a razor along your veins, but not too deep, only 3 cuts, send a photo to the curator.
4. Draw a whale on a sheet of paper, send a photo to curator.
5. If you are ready to “become a whale”, carve “YES” on your leg. If not—cut yourself many times (punish yourself)
6. Task with a cipher.
7. Carve “f40” on your hand, send a photo to curator.
8. You have to overcome your fear.
9. Wake up at 4:20 a.m. and go to a roof (the higher the better)
10. Carve a whale on your hand with a razor, send a photo to curator.
11. Watch psychedelic and horror videos all day.
12. Listen to music that “they” (curators) send you.
13. Cut your lip
14. Poke your hand with a needle many times
15. Do something painful to yourself, make yourself sick
17. Go to the highest roof you can find, stand on the edge for some time.
16. Go to a bridge, stand on the edge

17. Climb up a crane or at least try to do it
18. The curator checks if you are trustworthy
19. Have a talk “with a whale” (with another player like you or with a curator) in Skype
20. Go to a roof and sit on the edge with your legs dangling
21. The curator tells you the date of your death and you have to accept it
22. Wake up at 4:20 a.m. and go to rails (visit any railroad that you can find)
23. Don’t talk to anyone all day
24. Every day you wake up at 4:20 a.m.
25. Watch horror videos
26. Listen to music that “they” send you
27. Make 1 cut on your body per day
28. Jump off a high building. Take your life.

d) *The government has directed internet companies to ban the game. Should parents still be concerned?*

1. Although the government has asked companies such as Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft and Yahoo to immediately take down any links leading to the deadly game it is unclear how these companies would make the game inaccessible. It is because this game is not publicly available and freely downloadable. It is a social media phenomenon where conversations about this take place secretly in closed social media groups. You can only be part of the game if an administrator contacts you and enlists you as a potential whale, or candidate.
2. Also, it is now available under different names such as A Silent House, A Sea of Whales and Wake Me Up at 4:20 AM.
Alternatively, there could be other similar games available as well.

e) *Which age group is most prone to participating in this game?*

Tweens and teens (i.e. 12-19 years) the most vulnerable group of Social Media, are most prone to Blue Whale Challenge.

f) *What are the signs in teens that might indicate their inclination towards this game?*

Most child psychologists say when a child tends to stay by himself/herself, stops interacting with family and friends, often talks about running away from home or even death, or changes eating and/or sleeping habits must be immediately given special attention. These are the basic symptoms of a child who may be inclined towards participating in this online game. Some relevant links to the signs and symptoms may be found here and here.

g) *How can parents prevent their children from participating in such deadly online games or intervene?*

Here are a few tips on how you can keep your child safe online:

1. Having correct information about an issue is extremely important. The media reports on this issue do not make it clear that the role of this game/challenge in the recent cases of suicide has not been verified yet. Your child probably knows about the Blue Whale Challenge because of the media frenzy around this issue. Having said that, due to the uncertainty around this issue, there is a need to take certain measures to inform children and interact with them to avoid any mishaps.

2. Make sure that your child has access to age appropriate online sites which do not promote unethical behavior or violence.
3. Always ensure that your child accesses internet from a computer placed in the family space.
4. Talk to your child more often. Explore the online world together and engage in interesting activities demonstrating ethical and safe online behavior.
5. Use parental controls on all the devices used by your child. Monitor the screen time and keep an eye on his/her online activities.
6. Be a role model to your child. Be conscious of your own online activities.
7. Talk to other parents, share concerns if any and discuss best ways to help your children.
8. Keep yourself updated with recent internet phenomena.
9. Observe your child's behavior closely. Be alert to any unusual changes like moodiness, less or no communication, lack of interest in studies and falling grades. If you notice any such changes, closely monitor his/her online activities, talk to school authorities or consult a child psychologist.
10. If you find out that your child is already playing the Blue Whale Challenge, immediately stop him/her from using the internet from any devices.
11. Inform your local police authority about what has happened and seek their advice on the next safety measures.

h) How can teachers help?

- Teachers need to keep an eye on falling grades and social behavior of the students.
- They need to monitor the behavior of each and every child.
- They should look for anti-social behavior, they should personally talk to such children who don't interact with the other children much or are aloof.
- If they observe something that may seem suspicious or alarming, they should inform the school authorities immediately.
- Teachers should also ensure that children do not use any gadgets during school hours.
- They should ensure that children are sensitized about the pros and cons of the internet from time to time.

i) In case this information doesn't help, who can you contact?

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