



The Under Pressure game: guide for parents

In this guide, you'll find all the tips and information you'll need to use the Under Pressure game to talk to your child about disinformation, polarisation and democratic values. As a parent, you obviously have a lot of conversations with your child every day, and no doubt very complicated ones at that. To make it easier to talk with your child about these topics, we've put together some general tips based on our tried & tested teacher dialogue methodology for discussing taboo topics in the classroom. Next, you'll find an overview of the six levels that make up the Under Pressure game, with questions and tips to reflect on the content with your child for each level.

The game your child is about to play consists of 6 levels. Between each level, they'll be asked a few questions that will help you and your child reflect on the choices they made during the game. Below is an overview of the levels, the questions that follow, and some tips for talking with your child.

Level 1: Disguise

The purpose of this level is to show young people how easy it is to imitate a credible news site. Just because something sounds and looks official does not mean it is actually official. In this level, your child gets to know their way around the game and picks a nickname.

Questions at the end of the level:

- Why did you choose your nickname? Explain your answer in two sentences.
- Why not just use your real name? Much easier right? Explain why.

Tips:

Talk to your child about the nickname they picked. Their nickname may be innocent, but we often see ones with an aggressive or racist/discriminatory bent as well. In this case, try to find out why your child picked the name they did. Was it meant to be a joke? Would that joke be funny to everyone? Are there people who would be offended by the nickname? Tell your child which nickname you would have picked for yourself and why.

Level 2: Manipulate

In this level, players experience that you can quickly gain followers by appealing to people's emotions. Emotional content is more appealing than just the cold hard facts. Emotional posts that tap into basic emotions like fear, anger or empathy are more likely to resonate with an audience. In this level, your child plays on the emotions of the recipient by using emotional language, content and visuals to spread disinformation. The more fear they sow, the more points they'll earn.

Questions at the end of the level:

- Why is tapping into people's emotions such a useful tool? Explain your answer in two sentences.
- So what's the best way to make sure your message goes viral? Explain briefly.

Tips:

Try to find out whether your child identifies with the content they've disseminated. What emotions underlie this? What did your child experience or feel when disseminating the content? Do they recognise these emotions from their own real-life experiences?

Level 3: Polarise

The purpose of this level is to show your child that by driving people away from the moderate middle and making sure everyone either extremely favours or extremely opposes a particular issue, you can make a story much more important than it actually is. Players also learn that "fake news" doesn't necessarily have to be fake. They often contain certain elements of truth, ignoring certain aspects and greatly magnifying others. In this level, your child uses bots (a computer that simulates human action) to spread disinformation. The more discord and polarisation they manage to create, the more followers and points they'll earn.

Questions at the end of the level:

- How did you feel about driving people apart like that? Use two examples in your answer.
- Why do you think bots work so well in spreading disinformation? Explain your answer in two sentences.

Tips:

Ask your child about how they felt about using bots to spread disinformation and link their experience in the game to real life. If your child were to make the same choices in real life, what would the consequences be? And for whom?

Level 4: Conspiracy Theory

The purpose of this level is to show young people how easy it is to have your worldview manipulated and to lose trust in society as a result. Social media can play a key role in this. In this level, your child uses conspiracy theories of their own to spread disinformation.

Questions at the end of the level:

- What ingredients go into a good conspiracy theory? Name two.
- How could you have gotten even more followers in this level? Explain in two sentences.

Tips:

Ask your child what they think is the most popular conspiracy theory at the moment, and if they have any friends who believe in it. What do they think about that? Do they ever talk to their friends about their beliefs?

Level 5: Destroying reputations

The purpose of this level is to get young people to recognise dubious news outlets will commonly resort to slinging mud or smear campaigns when faced with criticism. When a news channel goes on an all-out attack, they often do so to detract attention from themselves. In this level, your child will actively explore these tactics. Players will come face to face with a fact checker who has undertaken to debunk the conspiracy theory they came up with in the previous level. They are given the option of attacking the fact checker, leaving them alone or apologising.

Questions at the end of the level:

- Why is attacking the fact checker such a smart move? Explain in two sentences.
- Briefly explain why a good troll would never apologise. (A "troll" is a person on the Internet who posts to provoke predictable emotional responses, anger or sadness.)

Tips:

Ask your child if they are familiar with this kind of slander (giving someone else a bad name) - and whether they have seen it happen on the media or social media they follow. What do they think about these tactics? In the level, they were given the option to attack the so-called fact checker. Ask them whether they did so and why.

Level 6: Trolling

The purpose of this level is to make players understand how trolls operate online. By tapping into emotions and deliberately sowing confusion about what is and is not true, they achieve their goal, which can have major consequences. This level also shows how certain sensitive issues can spiral out of control on social media. At the end of the level, players are told that the level, which revolves around a plane crash similar to the MH17 disaster, was based on real events.

Questions at the end of the level:

- Everything you read about in this level happened in real life. Heavy, right? Has knowing this changed how you feel? Briefly explain your answer.

Tips:

Ask your child whether they found it difficult to create chaos. And, of course, why or why not. Talk to your child about the potential effects of online trolling in real life.

Conclusion

You have reached the end of the game and this guide. We hope the game has prompted a good conversation between you and your child, and that you have been able to lay the foundations for future discussions about topics such as disinformation and polarisation. We are curious about your experiences; how you incorporated these questions in the process, whether you need anything else from us, and, of course, how the conversation went! You can send your feedback to Simone van Dijk at sdijk@diversion.nl.

Want to know more?

If, after reading this guide, you have any questions or would like to know more about the Under Pressure lesson programme, please contact Simone van Dijk at sdijk@diversion.nl.

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