A GUIDE TO
ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Introduction

We are all citizens of two worlds; one wrapped in blue skies and crystals of sand, while the other is rich with pixels and unique opportunities to connect. Our lives have become a constant transition between the two, with eachone of us creating and maintaining an avatar of our real selves. As a proud nation of believers in Justice, Freedom, Benevolence, Equality, and High Morals, we must ensure that the pixels which symbolize us online are representative of who we are and the values in which we believe offline.

Much of our day to day communication occurs online through Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). These technologies give us the ability to exchange ideas with people all over the world while accessing vast amounts of information on endless topics. Understanding that each of us shares the responsibility to use that technology and information to communicate in an ethical way is part of being a responsible online citizen.
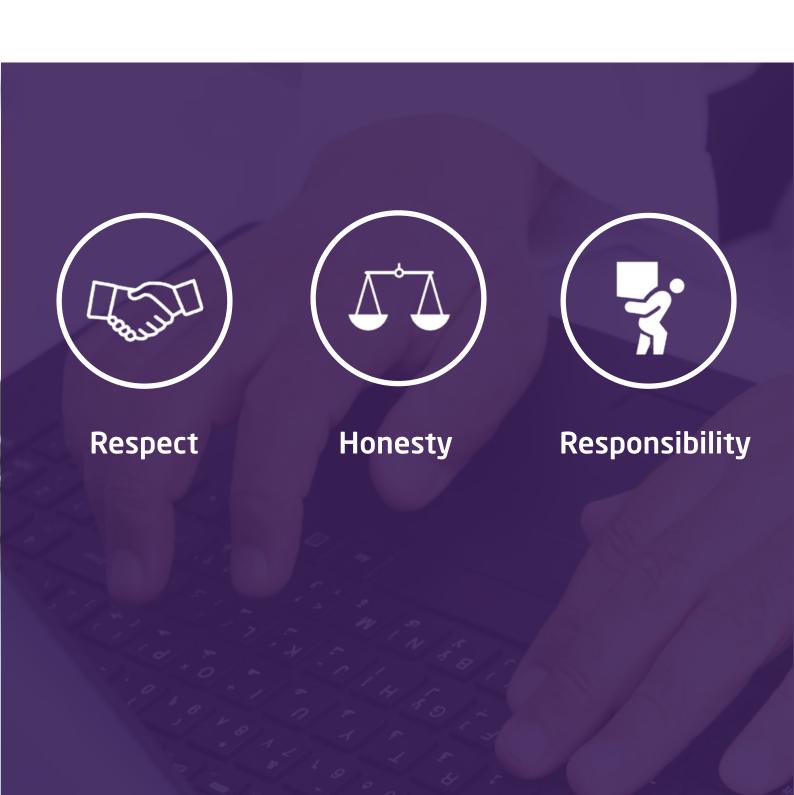
The Ministry has developed this guide to encourage the youth of Qatar to embrace responsible and ethical online behaviors. The values outlined in this document are Respect, Honesty, and Responsibility.These three core values are central to promoting positive interactions in an increasingly digital world.The core values emerged from a series of roundtable discussions involving participants from around Qatar with rele-

vant expertise and experience in the fields of communication, ethics and ICT. Afterward, the ideas from the November 2015 roundtable were shared with students at various universities in Qatar before being compiled into a draft document that could be tested using formal focus groups. This code draws on the collective values of our society and provides suggestions for how to embrace the specified core values in our daily ICT activities. It has been designed to help educators and parents discuss these values with children and adolescents as they begin to navigate the digital space and develop their online presence. It offers an opportunity to engage youth in building positive opportunities for online communication and encouragesresponsible use of ICT.

Although the creation of this document was intended for educating the youth of Qatar, the collective values that it represents are essential to engaging in responsible online interactions at all stages in life.

This document would not have been possible without the valuable insights of the many students and educators who shared their thoughts and experiences. The Ministry would like to thank all participants for generously sharing their time to discuss the values they believe are necessary for responsible engagement in an immensely digital world.

Core values for ethical online behavior

Respect

Honesty

Responsibility

Respect

Equality

No one person is better or more valuable than another

- Treat all people with the same level of respect and consideration
- Advocate for human rights and speak out in the face of oppression

Courtesy

To show politeness and kindness in your attitudes and behaviors towards others

- Respect other people's outlooks, privacy and property
- Give all users the chance to use their voice

Patience

One's capacity to be tolerant and understanding of time delays and varying perspectives

- Think thoroughly before we act or react
- People's understanding cannot be rushed

Our interactions cultivate our humanity. We should continuously behave in a way that embraces our own morality and honor by engaging in positive behaviors that reflect our principles and values. Our online behaviour demonstrates how we view ourselves and embrace equality, courtesy, and patience. We strive to preserve our own self-respect while maintaining our outward respect for members of the community. As part of the online community, you are never more or less valuable than other members and we expect others to show us the same level of respect and civility which we show them. People we interact with online should not pressure us into posting anything and we have the right to take our time and make well-thought out decisions.

Treat all people with the same level of respect and consideration

When engaging in intellectual conversations online, it is essential to remember that everyone is entitled to their own views and nobody's opinion should be held to a higher standard than that of another. The same way you respect other people's views, you should expect an equivalent level of consideration in return and you reserve the right to terminate contact with people online who show you as less than their equal.

Advocate for human rights

There are current issues and events in the world that are a threat to basic human rights and equality. It is our responsibility as global citizens to raise awareness about these issues. We can use our Internet access to uphold human rights by speaking about social issues, which serves to shed light on them and raise awareness. We also give a voice to those who are suffering or being discriminated against by speaking up for them.

Respect other people's outlooks, privacy, and property

Respecting other people online is an essential part of using the Internet. The Internet is accessed by people who have had very diverse upbringings, meaning that they will most likely have varied ways of thinking. We must respect other people and their views of the world. We should also respect others' privacy and property by not sharing information without their permission. Should we acquire their permission to share their information, we should adhere to their specifications and preferences.

Give all users the chance to use their voice

The Internet offers everyone the opportunity to voice their views. We must be mindful and considerate of all members of the online community. Everyone has the right to share their opinions without the fear of ridicule. If someone posts harmful content which conflicts with our principles and code of ethics, we should report them rather than engage them.

PATIENCE

Think before we act

Sometimes we may see things online that provoke us into reacting negatively. We must think about the consequences that could occur if we respond in a way that offends or harms others. Our reactions, whether positive or negative, affect our relationships with friends, family, and colleagues. Taking the time to collect our thoughts can serve to prevent negative consequences. It is important to remember that we are not obliged to respond immediately.

People's understanding cannot be rushed

Patience towards others is a true mark of character. Seeing as how we will encounter various diverse opinions and views, we must exercise patience with people who do not quite understand or have never encountered our mindsets. We can take the time to explain to them our thinking and we must not expect them to adhere to our way of thinking. In addition, when other people take the time to explain their views to us, we should be patient with them and attempt to understand their viewpoints.

Honesty

We should always be truthful,straight-forward, and exhibit a strong moral compass. It is vital to conduct our-selves in an ethical way to ensure a positive and constructive online ex-perience. Our online behavior should encourage the sharing of accurate and reliable information because being sincere and truthful in our statements and interactions is fun-damental in our real life and digital communications. All members of the online community should make every effort to remain sincere and straight-forward about who they are and their intentions. Expect a certain level of decency and morality from others.

Trustworthiness
Outward honesty and truthfulness

- Be a reliable and considerate member of the Internet
- Create a safe and harmless environment

Authenticity
Remain genuine and straightforward throughout your online interactions

- Stay true to yourself in all your online interactions
- Maintain honesty and decency

Integrity
Present the whole, undivided truth and exercise the ability to be fair and decent, as well as maintain high moral standards

- We must not hold our pride as having greater value than our relationships and character
- We must attribute great value to our word and hold true to what we say

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Be a reliable and considerate member of the Internet

Internet etiquette is extremely similar to offline etiquette. If we want others to trust and respect us, then our online actions must reflect that desire. We must avoid engaging in untruthful, disrespectful, or malicious conversations when speaking to others online. If others online approach us in this manner, we have the right to end all communication with them.

Create a safe and harmless environment

As members of the online community, we must ensure that our online activities do not offend, or make others feel unsafe. We should also step in to protect those who are being mistreated online. If we see something online that is harmful or offensive to others, we have a social responsibility to report it or remove the post. All Internet users are responsible for their own actions, as well as for helping to mitigate the negative impact of others users' actions whenever possible.

AUTHENTICITY

Stay true to yourself in all your online interactions

The Internet serves as a buffer between us and the people who view our content, as well as the people with which we choose to speak online. This makes it tempting to encompass attitudes and behaviorsthat reflect other people more than they represent us. However, it is important to remember that we are all unique and different in ways that make our interactions, both online and offline, fascinating and exceptional. Be genuine and true to yourself and encourage others to do the same.

Maintain honesty and decency

Honesty is crucial to being a responsible member of the online community. We know the risks of being dishonest offline, however we often feel it is acceptable to be dishonest online because we are not interacting face-to-face. Online activity can be traced back to us even when we think we are acting anonymously. If we tell lies or provide false content about ourselves or others, it can have negative consequences offline. Passing off another's work as our own is also a form of dishonesty. We would not want to be associated with immoral and potentially illegal activities offline, so we should not engage in them online either.

We must not hold our pride as having greater value than our relationships and character

As human beings, we make mistakes. There is no shame in admitting our wrongdoings or apologizing when we act in ways that make others uncomfortable or upset. We should also expect the same level of integrity from others. If we make our own discomfort known, others should be able to apologize for their role in the situation.

We must attribute great value to our word and hold true to what we say

In offline interactions, if we were to give our word on something, or make a promise, it would be expected of us that we carry through on that assurance. If we were not to follow through, we would give a bad impression of ourselves and people would no longer trust us. Online interactions are no different. We are expected to keep our word and do what we say we will do. Likewise, if someone promises us something, we have the right to expect them to follow through and withdraw our trust if given ample reason to do so.

Responsibility

Our behavior plays a significant role in developing our affective capacity, including our ability to express our thoughts and sentiments. We do our utmost to act in a way that demonstrates our self-discipline and respects the members of our community. To reflect our own values, our online behavior should embody and mirror our offline behavior, meaning there are certain things that should remain private and unseen by others. We expect others to respect our choices and not pressure us into sharing information. We, in turn, do not pressure others or criticize their choices.

Dignity

Understanding our own self-worth, as well as outwardly displaying high morals and strong principles

- Respect ourselves online as we would offline
- Represent our nation, culture and values with respect

Modesty

To behave in a manner that avoids indecency and impropriety

- We have the right to keep certain things to ourselves
- We should maintain a relative level of humility

Privacy

To keep certain things free from public attention

- Protect our discretion online
- Be vigilant of what we post

Respect ourselves online as we would offline

We should aspire to represent ourselves in a manner that gains the respect of others in everyday life. Having self-respect is crucial for our reputations, personal well-being, and our position within social circles. The way we behave online should mirror how we behave offline, meaning we uphold the same values and ethics. Anything we post online and interactions we have through the internet are a direct representation of us and our values. Therefore, being a confident and constructive member of the online community enables us to make the Internet a more beneficial and useful tool.

Represent our nation, culture and values with respect

We should not speak negatively about our religion, community, nation, or its values because this can negatively affect people's perceptions and encourage stereotyping. It is our social responsibility to preserve the dignity and honor of our home. The way we speak about ourselves, our country, and our culture online will help shape other people's views of us and our community, therefore we strive to keep those perceptions positive.

MODESTY

We have the right to keep certain things to ourselves

We are under no obligation to share any information about ourselves, our families, or any other subject. Being an online citizen implies that we are able to judge for ourselves what information can be made public and what information should remain private. Just as in our offline interactions, we are the gatekeepers to our own information and interactions. We should also respect other people's decisions in what they choose to share and what they choose to keep to themselves.

We should maintain a certain level of humility

Being a respectful and responsible online citizen entails being a humble, down-to-earth person. Do not seek excessive praise or recognition. Rather, be content within yourself that you have done something well or presented yourself as a decent person. Do not engage people who seek nothing but praise, however do try to give someone due respect and compliment when they do something worthy of it.

Protect our privacy online

We share personal information on the Internet in many ways. Sometimes it is conscious – signing up for a particular online account – but other times we may not know that information about us is being collected – your locational data while using your mobile, for example. We must be mindful that information is being collected whenever we are online. Once information is released onto the Internet or the digital world, it is nearly impossible to retract it. Attempt to take every precaution to keep yourself safe.

Be vigilant of what we post

We have to remember that the content we post could be made public, regardless of our privacy settings. We should practice restraint while posting, whether it is a picture, text or even when re-posting someone else's content. Keeping in mind that once something is on the Internet, it is nearly impossible to remove will serve as a good check for what we choose to share. We should protect our personal information, such as addresses, credit card numbers, passwords, etc., and restrict what we consciously post online to only information we wish to make public.