5 facts about the metaverse

What is it, where is it and what should parents and carers look out for?

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1 It's all about connection

One of the main ideas of the metaverse is connecting everything all together. In theory, that means you'd be able to finish a game in Roblox and go onto ZEPETO without the need for changing devices or platforms.

The goal for many is to make it so users can also connect with each other in meaningful ways within the online space. Video gaming, shopping, creating -- the metaverse would have it all!

2 VR and AR take centre stage

Although the metaverse takes place online, most people working in the metaverse want to make it as realistic as possible. That means using VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality). Those connections would feel more real if the user was immersed in the game.

Oculus from Meta is already working hard to create different metaverse interactions that use VR.

3 It will promote socialisation

Because of the VR setting, the type of socialisation the metaverse will offer is a bit different from what most people will be used to. But something like the metaverse could be very helpful for children -- especially those with SEND or other vulnerabilities -- in improving their social skills. The format could help them feel more comfortable and find others similar to them.

4 There will be new challenges & opportunities

The metaverse is constantly evolving and updating, which means there are going to be teething issues. While there will be plenty of space for users to explore new skills and ways of existing in the online space, there will also be challenges, especially when it comes to online safety.

Though older than the metaverse, the internet itself is still fairly new. As such, there are plenty of online issues we're still trying to handle and sort out. The metaverse will be no different. As new parts of the metaverse are unveiled, parents and carers will have to be vigilant about what their child is interacting with.

Virtual and augmented reality used at length may also bring about a rise in physical, cognitive and psychosocial development, which needs to be closely watched.

Meta says...
Products built for the metaverse will likely take 10-15 years to be fully realised.

5 The metaverse already exists!

Although it's still very much in the beginning stages, we are starting to see how the metaverse works by looking at the apps and platforms already using similar interactions like Fortnite and Minecraft.

Roblox, for example, allows users to create games and content while interacting with other users. They have hosted virtual concerts for users to attend and actively encourage creativity and collaboration.

Similarly, ZEPETO allows users to create clothing, games and worlds that they can 'fly' in between, exploring different landscapes and meeting new people.

It's going to take a long time to get to the point where many envision the metaverse going, but we can see it starting to form now.

What parents and carers can do now

As the metaverse slowly grows and starts to become one large entity, there are things parents and carers can do now to keep on top of it with their kids:

- Talk to them about their online lives including what they're interested in, who they're talking to and what they're doing

- Learn about their favourite platforms that are or could be in the metaverse like Roblox, ZEPETO, Minecraft and Fortnite.

- Regularly search about or read up on the metaverse to learn about new advances

- With your child, set up parental controls or privacy and security settings to help them understand why they are necessary and what they do

- Show them how to report and block unwanted interactions along with other features the platform might have like muting or restricting

- Explore their favourite platforms by playing together

- Learn about virtual reality and how your child might be impacted in the virtual space

- Talk to your child about money management especially when it comes to purchasing virtual items.