

# How to deal with online mom-shaming

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Many moms love to post on social media about fun family outings and their children's special moments and milestones. However, sometimes these posts can catch the unwanted attention of mom-shamers. A Baylor College of Medicine expert explains how to deal with mom-shaming when it happens.

"Mom-shaming is when other [people](#) criticize or shame a mom about her style of parenting in a way that makes the mom feel guilty, ashamed or bad about what she is doing," said Dr. Melissa Wilkes Requenez, assistant professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor.

Moms face various pressures at all stages of their children's lives, Wilkes Requenez said. For example, moms face pressure about whether to breastfeed, and for how long, or to work outside the home. Even as children grow, there are pressures about the healthiest diets for kids or which sleeping habits are best.

The rise of [social media](#) has only led to an increase in mom-shaming, she added.

"With social [media](#), people are exposed to a lot of additional influences, and there also is a drive for people to be posting or sharing a lot more and it seems people often respond often in a very negative way," she said.

Wilkes Requenez explained that when moms post on social media,

especially celebrity moms, they are exposed to a wider audience and may get comments from people all over the world who suddenly have an opinion about how the mom is parenting their child.

There are many reasons why other parents critique the parenting style of other people, Wilkes Requenez said.

"They may criticize others because they feel insecure or have low self-esteem," she said. "Sometimes within families there is a desire to help that is essentially misguided or verbalized wrong. A lot of people may not even realize how harmful their remarks or critiques can be. There also is a competitive spirit that is going on in our culture about which way is best to parent and people wanting to prove that their method is the best."

There have been limited studies conducted that show people who are heavily active on social media report higher anxiety and depression scores and that social media can lead to a greater sense of isolation and loneliness if that is somebody's only form of interaction. Because of this, Wilkes Requenez cautions moms against spending too much time on social media. If moms are spending lots of time on social media and are being mom-shamed, this compounded with a preexisting or current depression or anxiety disorder, along with sleep deprivation and hormone changes, can worsen a mom's self-esteem, her confidence and her ability to parent.

To cope with mom-shaming, Wilkes Requenez said it is essential for moms to have a good support system, whether it is through family or friends. They need to surround themselves with a circle of people who are positive influences and talk to people they trust. If a mom has concerns about a certain subject she has been criticized for, seeking advice from somebody with thorough knowledge about the subject would be helpful as well.

Wilkes Requenez emphasized that if a woman is having depressive symptoms, it is important for them to seek help through a mental health professional, their gynecologist or [primary care physician](#) so that they can look further into what is going on and determine if there is a condition that needs to be more fully addressed.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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