

Behind the Emojis: A Hidden Safeguarding Risk

Operam Education Group 



Emoji Explainer: Decoding the Hidden Language of the Manosphere

As online influences increasingly shape the attitudes and behaviours of young people, particularly boys, it's vital that educators stay informed about the subtle signs of exposure to harmful ideologies. Within manosphere communities online spaces that promote toxic masculinity, misogyny, and anti-feminist views emojis are often used as coded shorthand to share beliefs, mock others, or signal alignment with particular ideologies.

This guide highlights commonly used emojis linked to the manosphere and incel culture. While these symbols may seem harmless or playful on the surface, when used in certain combinations or contexts, they can reflect deeper engagement with concerning content. Designed for teachers, teaching assistants, and safeguarding staff, this resource supports early identification and intervention helping to keep school environments safe, inclusive, and informed.



Flexed Bicep Emoji

Stands for being a strong, dominant man, often linked to gym culture and the idea of being a 'high-status' man.



Fire Emoji

Used to praise someone for agreeing with manosphere beliefs or sharing an opinion that supports them.



Red Circle Emoji

Symbolises 'red pill' thinking – the idea that men need to 'wake up' to what they see as an unfair system working against them.



Black Circle Emoji

Represents 'black pill' beliefs, which say that men who aren't naturally attractive (so-called 'Chads') have no real chance in dating.



Skull Emoji

Used to show extreme hopelessness, especially in incel groups, suggesting they've given up on dating.

Cold Face Emoji



Cold Face

Shows emotional detachment, often linked to the idea that men should be tough and avoid showing feelings.



100 Emoji

Refers to the idea that 80% of women are only attracted to the top 20% of men, promoting feelings of male inadequacy or entitlement

Women and Dating



Crown Emoji

Used to show dominance, often linked to the idea that ‘men are kings.’ Sometimes used to mock men seen as too submissive to women.



Gorilla Emoji

Represents extreme masculinity, sometimes used jokingly to suggest raw strength and dominance.



Snake Emoji

Used to insult men who support feminism or gender equality, calling them traitors.



Money Bag Emoji

Stands for the belief that wealth equals power and makes a man more attractive to women.



Upside Down Face Emoji

Used sarcastically to mock feminist views or men who don’t follow manosphere beliefs..

Gender and Relationships



Dress / High Heel

Used to refer to women in a stereotypical or objectifying way.



Cat Face Emoji Used as an insult towards women, sometimes implying they are lonely or undesirable.



Wilted Flower Emoji

Suggests a woman is 'past her prime,' often used to criticise women over 30 in discussions about dating and relationships.



Baby Bottle Emoji

Used to mock men who are seen as too emotional or dependent on women, often calling them 'weak' or 'beta males.'



Unicorn Emoji

Represents the idea of a 'perfect' woman—someone who is submissive, young, and 'pure,' according to manosphere beliefs.

Mocking & Insults



Clown Face Emoji

Used to make fun of men who are seen as overly supportive of women, feminism, or progressive ideas.



Monkey Face Emoji

An insult aimed at men who are considered weak or who follow mainstream beliefs without questioning them.



Clown Face Emoji World Emoji

Suggests that society has become ridiculous or ‘broken’ because of feminism and progressive values.



Red Pill and Incel Terms



Hot Pepper Emoji

Sometimes used to describe an attractive woman, but often with a negative meaning, suggesting she is manipulative or dangerous.



Puzzle Piece Emoji

Refers to trying to ‘figure out’ women or understand dating like it’s a game or a code to crack.



Rocket Emoji

Symbolises rising in status, wealth, or power.



Wolf Emoji

Represents ‘lone wolf’ masculinity - rejecting mainstream dating and focusing on independence.

Summary & Further Support for Educators

Safeguarding in today's classrooms means staying alert not only to what's said but also to what's symbolised. Emojis, memes and online language can carry deeper meanings, often reflecting harmful attitudes that young people may absorb without question. This explainer is designed to help you decode the subtle signs, start conversations, and take action where needed. The more familiar you are with online trends, the better positioned you are to protect and support your pupils. If you're concerned about a student, always follow your school's safeguarding procedure and speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Useful Links & Resources

1. UK Safer Internet Centre

Resources for educators on digital wellbeing, social media, and online risk.

saferinternet.org.uk

2. Internet Matters – For Schools

Practical guides on social media safety, online influences, and managing digital behaviour in school.

internetmatters.org/schools

3. Educate Against Hate

Government-backed site offering guidance on radicalisation, online extremism and harmful ideologies.

educateagainsthate.com

4. NSPCC Learning – Online Safety Briefings

Briefings and training resources to help schools understand online safeguarding risks.

learning.nspcc.org.uk/online-safety

5. DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

Statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England, including digital safeguarding.

gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2