

Title: Perspective Taking in the Online Space

Age/Grade: Grade 8-10

Length: 35 minutes

In this lesson, students will:

- Know how their behavior changes when they are online as opposed to offline.
- Understand the impact that the internet has on all of our lives in both a positive and negative sense.
- Build strategies that will improve youth online decision-making in stressful online situations.

Overview:

It is easier to text someone you love than it is to tell them to their face. It is also easier to tell an athlete how much you hate them on Twitter than it is to their face as well. The internet works in interesting ways on our psyche. The comfort we feel behind the screen can come and go just as quickly as the anxiety. At this age, most youth are spending more time online than they are sleeping each day - something that was only magnified over the pandemic. And while the time we are spending online is not automatically bad or unhealthy, what youth are doing with this time and the decisions they make dictate their day-to-day experience in a number of ways. Like a slot machine, each pulldown on the screen to refresh the page is another spin for something new and exciting, or dangerous and costly. This lesson will aim to reflect on our relationship with technology and who we are when we go online. After reflection, we are going to expound on the factors that can impact our online decisions and the potential for risk this can cause, before building core skills in keeping safe and healthy through our own decisions and behaviors as digital citizens.

This lesson seeks to address to following questions:

- What are the positives that the internet offers me day-to-day?
- What risks are we taking online and how are we reacting to those presented to us?
- What is my role online in keeping myself and others safe?
- What skills can I improve to ensure my experience online remains positive and safe?
- How are the environments online and offline similar and different?

Materials:

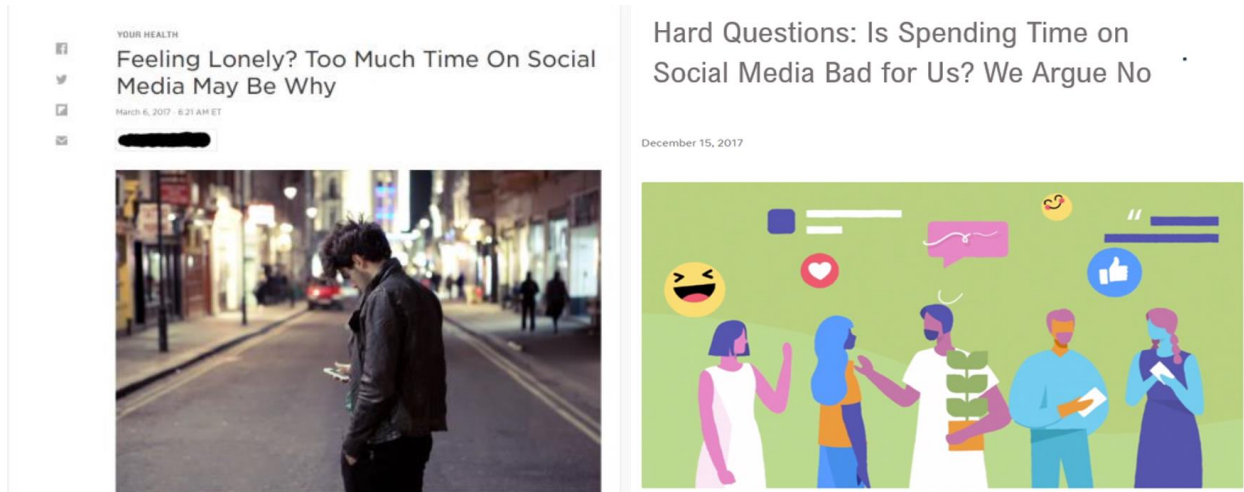
- Case Studies
- Slides?

Checkpoints:

Introduction - Activity & Discussion

8-minutes

At this step, we want to establish a rapport with the students over their relationship with social media and the internet. How we are going to do this is by breaking students into pairs and running a brief activity. Next, we will give half the students a headline to an article, and the other half a different headline. These two headlines are below.



Once you assign the pairs their article title, give them 3 minutes to develop a defense of their article, even if they don't personally believe it (this will come later). You want the students to think about all the positives and negatives that can come along with their relationship with social media and develop a reasoning for whichever side they are assigned.

Once the students have discussed with their partner for 3-minutes, ask if one of the groups would be willing to share their argument for why the article is correct, first. Once they have done so, ask the other groups with that same article if they would like to share their opinions or if they have anything they wish to add. Once the first article is discussed, then do the same for the second article. Once both sides of the argument have been presented by the students, open up the class for discussion and ask which of these articles the students actually agree with. Allow the students time to explore their experiences online.

What Do We Want to do?

2-4 minutes

It is always important to let students know where we are going in an online safety lesson, so use this as an opportunity to do so. Kids know a lot about the internet and online safety, and tell them you are not here to judge or tell them they need to be online less. We are here to have a

discussion about the internet and social media, and explore some things we know will help them remain safe online.

Does the Internet Make You Meaner?

5-minutes

Next, ask the students to stand-up and stand in the center of the classroom. Tell them that the left side of the classroom is YES and the right side of the classroom is NO. You are going to read a couple of statements and you want the group to move between two sections of the classroom based on what they believe. This is to introduce the idea of online disinhibition to the group.

- Does the internet make your friends meaner?
- Are we more comfortable making decisions online than we are offline?
- Are we held accountable for the things we do online the same way we are offline?

After each question, debrief with the students to talk about why they align the way that they are on these questions. Ask why? How? And what is it about the online environment that can make this difference? Take this opportunity to introduce the idea of online disinhibition to the group and how it can play a key role in some of the risky situations we might find ourselves in and allow for some potentially unsafe situations.

Activity: Building Coping Skills to Online Risks

12-minutes

At this stage, you want to build some of the skills to a vast variety of risks that we see youth encountering online. At this point, break the students into groups of 3-5, meaning there should be around 4 groups. For each group, you are going to give a situation or a case (each different), and they will have to look into this case from 3 separate perspectives: the victim; bystander; and perpetrator. This is meant to give a multitude of perspectives and allow the students to expand their perspective taking into a number of risks that might be presented to them when online. Additionally, this will help students apply these situations to their own online experiences as well.

Case 1: Instagramming in the shadows

Case 2: Disinformation

Case 3: Digital Drama vs. Digital Health

Case 4: Threat of violence

After the students have time to go through each case, ask each group to give a debrief about their case to their classmates in the other groups. Then ask them the three questions:

- Explain the situation the person being victimized in this case is in and what would be your reaction to what is happening/happened?
- How did the bystander come across this situation? How might you react in this situation if you were in their spot? What is the best coping strategy they can employ here?
- And for the perpetrator, what might be at-play in their decision-making in this case?

Closing

3-5-minutes

To close up, you want to return to the complexities of our online lives. There are natural processes that can impact our decision-making, but we are in-control of our digital health and wellbeing. Use this as a way to introduce digital citizenship and what it means. What is our role in the online marketplace of ideas, opportunities and risk? They should begin to think about what their role is and how they can play a critical role in making a difference on those around them and those they may have never even met. You want to lay the foundation for the problem solving activity they are going to participate in.

Case 1: Jessie; Erin; Casey

1. Jessie

Attending high school in Massachusetts, Jessie has a core group of friends, plays soccer and basketball for the school, and does fine in school. During her sophomore year, she began to notice that people were talking to her and bringing up things she didn't know she had told them, people seemed to be sneaking pictures of her, and her friends seemed to be hiding something from her whenever she was around them. After a few weeks, while at her soccer practice, she got a notification from Instagram saying "**Just_so_Jess**", who you might know, is on Instagram". She clicked on the notification and the account was private, but the profile picture was a photo of her from her Instagram story that she remembered posting a handful of weeks ago...

2. Erin

Erin was friendly with Jessie from sharing classes with her but doesn't know her very well. She is part of a different friend group but the school isn't very big so they overlap often. Some of Erin's friends play sports with Jessie and one of them sent Erin a screenshot of an Instagram post of Jessie alone on the soccer bench with the caption "alone now and forever". Erin didn't recognize the "handle" so she looked up the account and noticed it was private. She requested to follow the account and was almost instantly accepted. After accepting, her friend texted her saying "Don't tell any1 about this account. Friends only...". Erin took some time to look through the photos posted and it posts almost daily pictures making fun of Jessie, screenshots of private text conversations, photoshopped pictures of Jessie that she posted on Instagram herself, and many more.

3. Casey

Casey plays soccer with Jessie and has known her for a long time. Casey and Jessie aren't best friends but they are friendly toward each other when they are together, which is frequent during the sports seasons. However, Casey and some of the other teammates became frustrated with Jessie being named a team captain on the soccer team as a sophomore and felt it was because she sucks-up to the coach. After Casey and some of the other players on the team became frustrated, they began a group chat with a large group of the team (not Jessie) to send memes, photos, and "joke" about Jessie. Not long after, Casey decided to start a private Instagram and share the sign-in and password with those in the groupchat. She told them that everyone could post whatever they wanted, but to keep it "on the downlow". People started to invite their friends to follow the account and the posts began to become more and more hostile.

Case 2: Ethan, Olivia, Jackson

1. Ethan

Ethan is one of the few Asian-Americans at his schools. He has a number of very close friends and is widely liked by everyone around the school, by both students and teachers. About halfway through the 2020 school year, the COVID-19 pandemic was starting and cases began to pop up in America. During this time, Ethan started to see Tweets, TikToks, and YouTube videos implying that Asians are more likely to have the virus and that they are bringing it to America to spread it around. Ethan knew this was ridiculous and it angered him, but he moved on and tried not to let it bother him until he began to realize that it was his classmates sharing this information. A week later, when he arrived at school, someone had covered his locker in “HAZARDOUS WASTE” caution tape.

2. Olivia

Olivia, who is best friends with Ethan, also started to see her and Ethan’s classmates retweeting, favoriting, sharing, and commenting on the posts that were suggesting all Asians had the virus and they were not to be trusted. This also angered Olivia but she didn’t do anything about it thinking that it wouldn’t be harmful. In the days following, she saw some classmates make a TikTok video using Ethan’s name, along with the other Asian-Americans at the school, and referencing information they had heard on a podcast that the Asian diet is what gives all Asians the COVID-19 virus. The TikTok video seemed to show data and research, which confused her, and decided not to do anything about it out of fear of being wrong.

3. Jackson

As COVID-19 started to show up in America more, Jackson had questions about what was going on. After watching some videos about what was going on, his main takeaway was that the virus is coming from China and that the only ones that have the virus right now are Asian. He started to then listen to some podcasts that he was suggested to listen to on Reddit and they blamed the virus coming to America because of a soup that Asian-Americans eat as part of their diet. Jackson began to share this amongst his friends and on his social media accounts. He started to express his discomfort of being around all people who were Asian online, and eventually decided to carry it out offline by vandalizing the lockers of all Asian students at school.

Case 3: Chloe, Collin, Liam

1. Chloe

Chloe is a junior in high school and spends around 5 hours online every day. She also had a boyfriend that she talks to throughout the day, goes to school with, and when they do not hang out after school, they would message on WhatsApp in the afternoon and evening. During this time, her and Liam would maintain conversation about what they were doing, things that happened throughout their days, what their parents were doing, and other mundane things. Chloe sometimes would just take breaks between texts because she didn't feel like she had to have conversations with Liam every waking second of the day if there was nothing to talk about. One afternoon, she went an hour between answering Liam because of something she was helping her dad with and Liam texted her 15 times. He then posted on his Instagram story their text conversation, adding in "get yourself a gf that actually answers you 😬". After this, he shares a couple of responses he received from some of their classmates, saying "too busy for you?" and "probably with Collin or something". This greatly upset Chloe, who is just friends with Collin and felt great stress and anxiety for how this played out online.

2. Collin

Collin is good friends with Chloe after knowing her for a long time and has become friendly with Liam as well since they started dating about a year ago. Collin doesn't talk to either of them very often outside of school but texts Chloe from time to time. Chloe had told Collin that Liam was not a fan of how often her and Collin texted, but Chloe told him that he was just jealous and not to worry about it. Then, one afternoon, he was tagged in an Instagram story by someone saying that Chloe was cheating on Liam with him. This of course upset Collin and decided to just turn his phone off instead of getting involved.

3. Liam

Liam and Chloe are close and joke around a lot. But he has been getting very frustrated when Chloe takes a long time to answer his texts. He doesn't know where she is and doesn't understand what she could be doing. After about an hour of no response after school one day, he decided to screenshot their text chain and post it to his Instagram.

Case 4: Logan, Addison, Riley

1. Logan

While on TikTok one afternoon, Logan is scrolling through videos until he comes across one posted by Riley. Riley is a classmate of his and they've known one another since elementary school but aren't particularly close. On the clip is Riley saying that his AirPods disappeared from his locker at school today. He flashes photos of his backpack, locker, and jacket saying they weren't in any of those places. After this, he said that the school won't do anything about it and he is going to take matters into his own hands. He then flashes 6 names down the screen in front of his face saying "one of these people have them and they know it. Watch your back". Logan is one of those names, even though he did not have anything to do with it, and he knows the other 5 names as well. Logan decides not to go school the next day to avoid being attacked.

2. Addison

While on TikTok, Addison comes across the video posted by Riley. Addison doesn't know Riley too well but is friendly with him and is also friendly with Logan and the others named on the videos. Addison is a little anxious about the video after thinking Riley might beat somebody up, but then her friend texts her the video saying she thinks the whole thing is a joke. Not entirely sure whether the situation is a joke or serious, she decides not to get involved and just ignore the video.

3. Riley

Riley couldn't find his AirPods anywhere and thought that someone else had something to do with it. He didn't think that the school would be able to help him out and find them so he thought taking it into his own hands would solve the issue. He didn't actually plan to hurt anyone, but thought posting the video would scare someone enough to give his AirPods back. He doesn't know for sure whether these 6 classmates had actually stolen them, but he thought they wouldn't have enough money to pay for them so he assumed they would steal them. After he posts the video, the next day at school he realizes that a handful of those students didn't come to school out of fear as to what Riley might do.