

Lesson three: Online relationships

Ages 12-14

+ Lesson overview

This is the third of six lessons, focusing on empowering and supporting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson explores how young people can access help to keep themselves, and their personal information safe whilst online, particularly when developing relationships through social media, including gaming platforms.

Learning objective

To learn about the benefits, challenges and risks involved in the use of social media and about ways to manage risk online.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Evaluate the benefits, challenges and risks involved in using social media
- Identify when relationship behaviours online carry risk, and strategies to manage risk online
- Explain how to seek help if concerned about something that happens online

Resources

- Box or envelope for questions
- A3/Flipchart paper (1 per small group of three to four)
- Resource 1: *Key Questions* (1 per person)
- Resource 2: *Talking Heads* (1 per pair)
- Resource 3: *Story Stems* (1 per person)

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
Introduction	Introduce learning objective and outcomes and revisit ground rules.	5 mins
Baseline assessment	Rate confidence about the lesson content and respond to key questions.	10 mins
Evaluating social media	Combine their individual lists into group lists of the benefits and challenges of using social media.	10 mins
Talking heads	Explore fictional people's experiences with social media and identify concerning experiences.	10 mins
Managing risk	Storyboard the end of stories relating to online bullying and grooming, indicating how someone could manage risk and seek help.	15 mins
Reflection and endpoint assessment	Return to their confidence scales and key questions from the start of the lesson.	5 mins
Signpost support	Remind the class how to access further advice, guidance, and support about relationships.	5 mins

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include guidance on ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, relevant subject knowledge, communication, and handling questions effectively.

Keywords

Social media, e-safety, online media, responsibility, profile settings

Baseline assessment

➤ Introduction – 5 mins

Negotiate or revisit ground rules for the lesson and remind the class they can put questions in the question box, either anonymously, or with their name on if they would like to have a follow-up conversation.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will explore how people can access help to keep themselves and their personal information safe online, particularly when social media is used as a form of communication in developing relationships.

➤ Baseline assessment activity – 10 mins

Hand out *Resource 1: Key questions* and ask the class to draw a square on each continuum line to rate their confidence on each statement, and then complete the tables with examples of:

- The benefits and challenges of using social media
- The risks and benefits of meeting people online
- Ways to minimise risks online and ways to respond if someone feels unsafe online
- Safer and less safe online relationship behaviours

The class should keep their responses safe until the end of the lesson and not add anything to their sheets during the core activities.

Core activities

➤ Evaluating social media – 10 mins

Ask groups of 3-4 to share the benefits and challenges of using social media from their baseline assessment. They should also use the prompts on Slide 4 to add any further benefits or challenges to make a new combined group list.

Once the class have compiled lists in their groups, they should elect a member from their group to visit one to two of the other groups in the classroom. This person should compare similarities and differences in the benefits and challenges identified between groups, and these should be added in a different colour.

Take feedback by asking what aspects the class found they had in common in their lists, and if there were any differences between groups.

Key learning:

Positives; you can get information quickly and from different people / sources / experts, connecting with people cheaply and easily from all over the world, staying in contact with friends when you can't be together, getting new perspectives, it provides independence, it's interesting / fun/ entertaining, a good way to express yourself or meet new people, boost your confidence.

Negatives; information can be unreliable / hard to tell if it's reliable or not, can lead to negative comments / bullying / hate speech, algorithms manipulate or limit what people see, can have impact on self-esteem, body image and mental health, may see something online that is inappropriate/upsetting (e.g. violent or sexual content), bad to use late at night because it can prevent someone from sleeping, can be distracting when there are other important things to focus on (e.g. homework, family).

➤ Talking heads – 10 mins

Hand pairs *Resource 2: Talking Heads*. Ask the class to identify similarities and differences in these people's experiences of social media. Use Slide 5 to develop the class's answers.

In their small groups, ask the class to return to the list created of the benefits and challenges of social media. Ask if any of their ideas were identified by the characters, and if there is anything else they would like to add.

Support: Select one or two characters from the Talking Heads sheet and rewrite or say the comments in their own words. They should then decide if they think the character likes using social media or not, and why.

Challenge: Choose one or two characters from the Talking Heads sheet and give them advice about using social media, suggesting how they could change their online behaviour.

➤ Managing risk - 15 mins

Hand out *Resource 3: Story stems*. Ask the class to read the story stem and to finish the story as a storyboard or script. They should include a response to the prompts on Slide 6. Discuss as a class the potential risks and positive opportunities, the tensions, or differences between online and offline relationships, as well as suitable and unsuitable responses to each scenario.

Key learning:

Suggestions from the class might include that the characters can seek support from trusted adults or friends. For example, George and Mariam could speak to someone at home, or to a member of staff at school about their experiences online and their concerns.

The class might also suggest how staff or an adult at home might respond to this, for example a Head of Year or pastoral member of staff could support George in responding to the cyberbullying experiences and help to find ways to stop this from continuing. The class might suggest that if George has friends who use the same social media platform that they may be able to support him as well, for example by reporting any images, videos or hurtful comments.

In Mariam's story in particular, the class should recognise the need for caution when meeting someone online and that Mariam doesn't actually know the boy. The class might suggest that he might not be who he seems, and that he may be building a relationship with Mariam with the intent of harming her. They may also suggest that Mariam could talk to her friends about the new person's requests so that they're aware of any concerns. If he makes her feel pressured they could prevent him joining the group, or they might choose to play a different game. Stopping playing games when her friends have stopped for the evening could also be helpful as Mariam's friends may be able to help support her in managing pressure from the new person if he is in the group.

In both scenarios there may be ways for both Mariam and George to report their concerns to the platform they are using.

Challenge: Script a conversation between the characters in their storyboard, demonstrating what they are thinking and what they are saying. This script should make it clear whom the character has chosen to talk to and demonstrate how the characters might resolve this situation in the safest way possible.

Plenary/assessment for end of learning

➤ Reflection and endpoint assessment – 5 mins

Ask the class to return to *Resource 1: Key questions* from the start of the lesson.

In a different colour pen, they should draw a triangle on the continuum to demonstrate how they feel about each statement now and add any new learning or make changes as needed to their responses to the key questions.

➤ Signposting support – 5 mins

If young people require advice on what they have discussed in the lesson or have concerns, signpost them to support at home or in school (such as tutors and head of year.)

- Childline www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- Childnet www.childnet.com
- NCA-CEOP www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Extension activity

➤ Extension

Write a letter or a persuasive speech directed at the head of a social media platform of their choice. The letter/speech should provide advice about how to support young people online, specifically recommending new rules, guidance, or boundaries to be put in place in order to make online networking a safer experience.

Ideas and suggestions for rules may need to be discussed as a class first, for example:

- It should be made clear when photos have been edited or changed
- Privacy settings should automatically be set to maximum unless the user changes them
- People who are not your friends shouldn't be able to send you a private message
- Sites should have to reply if you report abuse to explain what they are doing
- Sites should be stricter about the age limit for joining or there should be specific social media that is user friendly and safe for younger people

To support this discussion, teachers may wish to share the 5rightscampaign, designed to establish young people's rights online: www.5rightsframework.com