

Using social media for good

With social media playing an increasing role in our lives, people are questioning how it is used. For example, recent news articles have focused on the role of social media in spreading false information. A recent study found that 60% of adults had read false news in recent weeks.

The less positive aspects of social media are balanced by stories of how social media can be used as a force for good. It is an important way for people to connect and communicate with friends, loved ones and the wider community. Social media can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and disconnection that people can sometimes experience, by helping us keep in contact with each other and to connect with what is happening in the wider world.

These quick reflective activities encourage young people over the age of 13 to start to examine the role social media plays in their lives, and how they can use it responsibly and with kindness.

Learning objectives

Learners will:

- Consider the positive and negative aspects of social media
- Examine how they use social media to connect to others
- Develop kindness and resilience
- Discuss how digital platforms can be used positively and with kindness

Discussion activity: Social media stats (ages:13-19)

Begin by thinking about how many people in the world are connected to each other via social media.

- > How many social media platforms do you use?
- > How many people do you connect to on each one?
- > How many hours a day do you spend on social media?

Encourage learners to think about their experience. What about these numbers worldwide?

- > 4.5 billion people now use the internet (60% of the population)
- > 3.8 billion people use social media
- > The average time people spend on their devices each day is 3 hours 40 minutes, 50% of that is spent talking via messenger services.

Now consider:

- > What does this tell us about how people are using social media?
- > What might the main reasons be for people being part of social media?

Reflective activity: Walking debate (ages: 13-19)

Reflect on your own engagement with social media platforms - how would you describe your experience?

Read out the statements below and decide how much you agree or disagree with each. If completing this activity as a group, you can draw a scale on a piece of paper or digitally and point to where you are on the line. You could set up a digital poll, or even label one side of the room as 'agree' and one as 'disagree' to move towards in response to each statement below. Consider or discuss why you agree or disagree with each of the following:

- > Social media plays a big role in my life
- > People are more honest on social media
- > People can be less kind on social media
- > I publish a lot of things online
- > I tend to share news articles I see, even if I don't know if they are true or not
- > I see a lot of information on social media and I am not sure what is true and what is not
- > I always consider other people's feelings when I post on social media
- > Communicating with social media can help you deal with your feelings
- > Online bullying is a big problem.

Connections activity (ages: 13-19)

Connecting with people is important, especially now. It is easy to feel isolated when we are away from our friends and social groups. Although we are apart physically, social media can help us feel close to our loved ones. This allows us to have many connections to different groups of people all over the world. Have learners create a map of everyone they are connected to. Encourage learners to think about:

- > Why these connections are important to you?
- > Why is it important to stay in touch especially now?
- > How can we safely remain in contact with each other?

Draw a map with their name in the middle. Close to their name write the names of those they live with, and then further away those they are connected to in different ways on social media. Draw a different coloured line to represent a different kind of connection - maybe blue for physical, yellow for social media, green for phone conversations, etc.

Reflect on your map. Is there anyone not on the map who you want to connect with more? Maybe a family member who doesn't have social media? How can you stay connected to them?

However, we should keep in mind that not everyone likes to connect in the same ways. Spending too much time on social media can be tiring for some. Others might feel comforted by constant contact. It is important to see the situation from both sides. Fold a piece of paper in half and write the positives and negatives of social media. Think about how you would like people to contact you.

Sharing kindness (ages: 13-19)

Think about the ways that you and others have used social media in a positive way. It could be sharing positive news stories, sharing something kind you did for your Power of Kindness Calendar, or just checking in on someone. Remember to practice safe internet skills if sharing things online. Share responsibly and safely.

Challenge yourself and your friends to use social media in a positive way once a day. This could include not using social media. Add this to your [Power of Kindness Calendar](#) or use the suggested activities as inspiration for what to do.