

Using social media for good

With social media playing an increasing role in our lives during lockdown, people are questioning how it is used. For example, recent news articles have focused on the role of social media in spreading false information about coronavirus. A recent study found that 60% of adults had read false news in recent weeks. For more information about how to spot misinformation check out the misinformation quiz in our Coronavirus Newsthink.

But the less positive aspects of social media are balanced by stories of how social media can be a force for good. It is an important method for people to connect and communicate with friends, loved ones and the wider community whilst social distancing measures are in place. Social media can help to reduce the sense of loneliness and disconnection at this time, helping us keep in contact with each other.

These quick discussion activities encourage young people 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.
- > Discuss how digital platforms can be used positively and with kindness.

Discussion activity: Social media stats

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.

Walking debate

Ask learners to reflect on their own engagement with social media platforms and how humane they think their experience has been. Read out the following statements and ask learners to say how far they agree or disagree. You can draw a scale on a piece of paper and have them point to where they are on the line or even label one side of the room as 'agree' and one as 'disagree'. Ask learners to explain why they agree or disagree.

- > 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 publicly 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

Connecting with people is important, especially now. It is easy to feel isolated when we are inside, far away from our friends and normal groups. Although we are apart physically, social media can help us feel close to our loved ones. Social media allows us to have many connections to different groups of people, some very far away from us. Have learners draw a map of everyone they are connected to.

Have learners draw a map with their name in the middle. Close to their name write the names of those they are in the same house 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 one social media platform, green for another. It is good to remember that although we are apart, we are not alone.

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

Not everyone likes to connect in the same ways though. Spending too much time on social media talking to lots of different people can be tiring for some. Others might feel comforted by constant contact. It is important to see the situation from both sides.

Sharing Kindness

Think about the ways that you and others have used social media in a positive way during this time. It could be sharing positive news stories, sharing something kind you did for your Power of Kindness Calendar or just checking in on someone.

Challenge yourself and your friends to use social media in a positive way once a day. Add this to your Power of Kindness Calendar or use the suggested activities as inspiration for what to do. Share your kind acts on social media using #Powerofkindness.