

## 6.5 RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

LEVEL 2 3

### Big Ideas in Module 6.5

- Social and digital media can be used to either empower or disempower and harm young people. Increasing the opportunities for **empowerment** means teaching online safety and responsible social media engagement.
- **Consent** is an important concept to examine when considering how to use social and digital media responsibly.
- There are serious legal and social consequences for using social and digital media for purposes such as **cyberbullying**, sexual **harassment**, and/or **cyberstalking**.

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Become aware of the impact of social and digital media on themselves and their peers, including laws that prohibit the distribution of sexual images.
- Become familiar with the concept of consent (for more information, see chapter 8).
- Consider how creating an online safety plan is integral to ensure that empowering experiences on social media (such as self-representation and community building) do not turn into disempowering or harmful experiences.

### Cross-Curricular Connections

- Art (visual, digital)
- Communications Studies
- English
- Equity Studies
- Gender Studies
- Law
- Media Studies
- Psychology
- Social Studies
- Sociology

### Terminology

- Consent
- Cyberbullying
- Cyberstalking
- Discrimination
- Empowerment
- Harassment

### Materials

- Printed copies of **Information Sharing**
- Printed copies of **Social and Digital Media Scenarios**
- **Educator Answer Key—Social and Digital Media Scenarios**
- Printed copies of **Social and Digital Media Safety Plan**
- Writing and drawing materials
- An assortment of stickers
- Paper
- 🛠️ Optional: Projector or Smart Board

### Background Information for Educators

Digital and communications technologies, including cell phones, smart phones, the internet, and social media constitute a world of possibility for young people. These technologies are platforms for self expression, self-representation, learning and imagination, and tools for communication, connection, and/or community engagement.

These possibilities also come with risk and vulnerability. Abuse, violence, and **discrimination** can take a range of forms online, including cyberbullying, cyberstalking, sexual predation, harassment, and assault. Consent from all involved is something that needs to be obtained before posting any kind of images or photos that are not yours to post. (For more information on consent and sexual violence, see chapter 8). Harm can follow as a consequence of sharing private information, images, and photos (both consensually and non-consensually). It is therefore important to think through all of the possible consequences of sharing information, images, and photos, before they are shared/posted and to make a decision based on knowing all of the information and having consent from everyone who might be impacted. (For a list of crisis lines, see **National Support Services** in the resources section).

### YOU SHOULD KNOW



With some exceptions, the circulation of naked, partially naked, and/or sexual or intimate images of people under 18 years of age is prosecutable by law. (For more information, see 6.5 resources).

In order to maximize the benefits of these platforms and minimize their risks, it is important for young people to use them ethically, to set limits, to recognize danger, and to get help and support when needed. It is important for educators to support students in navigating the sometimes uncertain terrain of maximizing social media platforms for empowerment while minimizing their risk.

### Student Readiness

Before students engage with this lesson, ensure that safer space guidelines and group norms have been established (and revisited) within your classroom (for more information on how to establish safer space guidelines, see module 1.3). In order to effectively prepare for this activity, ensure students understand that:

- Social and digital media is not inherently good or bad, it is a tool that must be engaged with thoughtfully and critically.
- This module discusses consent, cyberbullying, and sexual violence.
- Creating online safety plans is a way of keeping yourself, your friends, and everyone at school safe.

### Summary of Activities

Students will:

- Place stickers around the room indicating social and digital media habits and in small groups, discuss what is appropriate to share over social media and when.
- In pairs, work through a series of scenarios identifying problematic behaviours and creating action plans and prevention strategies.
- Choose a preferred social/digital media platform and individually create a series of posts that represent the empowering aspects of social media.
- Individually create a social/digital media safety plan.

### Activity 1 2 3

#### Instructions

1. Place Sheets of paper around the room with the following headings:
  - I use a mobile device (phone, tablet, etc.)
  - I access social media using my mobile device
  - I have seen an embarrassing post and/or advertising
  - I have regretted a social media post that I made
  - I have been impacted by cyberbullying (either directly or indirectly experienced and/or contributed to)
2. Pass around an assortment of stickers. Ensure that each student gets at least 4.
3. Ask students to walk around the room, look at each heading, and place one of their stickers under the headings that apply to them.
4. Once everyone has placed their stickers around the room, ask students to walk around, noticing where stickers are clustered.
5. Place students into small groups of 3 to 4. Using the **Information Sharing** handout, have each group determine the circumstances under which it is appropriate and safe to share the following over social media:
  - Their screen name or handle
  - Their age
  - The name of their school
  - The name of their street
  - The names of their friends
  - Their phone number
  - A photo of their pet

- A video of themselves playing sports
- A photo of themselves in underwear
- A photo of a friend in their underwear

### YOU SHOULD KNOW



There are no definite answers to most of these items; however, being cautious about what you post online and obtaining consent before posting information, images, and photos of others are two good general rules. The Educator Answer Key provides some general questions that can help structure students' assessment of what to post online and when. The only place where there are strict laws related to the posting/distribution of images is in regards to child pornography laws and the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*. Sharing a photo of themselves or a friend in their underwear, which involves partial nudity, needs to be considered within the legal context; any type of sexual image of a person under 18 is considered child pornography and illegal in Canada. Even consensual "sexting" between youth under 18 could be considered illegal, depending on the images involved. (For more information, see 6.5 resources).

6. Make sure that students note where there was agreement, disagreement, and/or debate. Ask them to consider:
  - Why was there disagreement (if any) and how did it get resolved (if at all)?
  - Were there any items where there was no disagreement or debate? Why do you think this was the case?
  - Are there any guidelines to assess what is appropriate and safe, when would you apply these?
7. Come back together as a large class and have one person from each group present their answers. Highlight the differences and similarities between the boundaries that each group sets for each item.

**EDUCATOR ANSWER KEY**

There are no definite or right answers to most of this activity (except for the last two items where child pornography laws and consent must be taken into consideration); however, there are some general guidelines that can help your students think through their answers. Conclude this activity by emphasizing that it is always important to be cautious about what you post on the internet. Some general prompts to guide how your students think through online safety include the following:

- Is this my image/photo to share?
- Do I have consent to post this image/photo?
- Who can see this post/photo and do I trust all of the people that might have access to it?
- What are the privacy settings and safety controls like on this particular tool that I am using? How much control do I have over who gets to see the content of my post/photo?
- Once posted, who owns the content?
- How would a friend, family member, and/or potential employer see this post/photo?
- What are the potential consequences of this post/photo if they got into the hands of people who did not know or did not like me?
- Does this post/photo reveal an aspect of me that I would not otherwise share with friends, family, and/or co-workers?

**Activity 2** 2 3**Instructions**

1. Have students work in pairs on **Social and Digital Media Scenarios**.
2. Ask students to analyze Scenario A and answer the questions by putting themselves into the mindset of both Beck and Beck's employer. Allot 5 to 7 minutes.
3. Change the pairings so that students are with a new partner. Have students work on Scenario B.
4. Change the pairings one more time for Scenario C.
5. As a large group, ask students what surfaced in the discussions that was compelling for them. What surprised them? Where were there agreements and disagreements between partners in terms of the scenario analysis? What are common themes in the scenarios? How could each of these scenarios have been prevented? What were some important lessons that emerged from the conversations between partners?

**{TW}**

**POSSIBLE MENTIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**  
*(for more information on trigger warnings, see modules 1.3 and 1.6)*

Activity 3 2 3

## Instructions

1. Ask students to choose a social/digital media platform that they find empowering for self-expression, self-representation, and/or community connection/engagement.
2. Ask students to individually brainstorm reasons why they find this form of social/digital media empowering. *Students can brainstorm by using writing, drawing, or some other visual representation/tool, such as a mind map.*
3. For homework, have students create a series of posts (or other content appropriate to the social media platform) that digitally represent why they find social media empowering. For instance, if a student finds using Instagram empowering because they are a vegan and do not know many other vegans at their school, they might consider creating a series of vegan food posts to share recipes and bring attention to the reasons why they are vegan.
4. As students work on their homework assignment, ask them to complete the **Social and Digital Media Safety Plan** and reflect on ways to protect themselves and their social/digital media content.
5. ✦ Optional: Ask students to present their social media content and safety plans to the rest of the class using a projector or Smart Board.

**QUICK TIP**

If you do not have access to a projector or Smart Board, ensure that students hand in a written assignment outlining the goals of their social media project, why they chose to focus on the format and topic that they did and their Social/Digital Media Safety Plan.

## Wrap-up

Summarize the module with the following points:

- Social and digital media use is full of possibility, both positive and negative.
- Use social/digital media platforms wisely, cultivating awareness of the viral and long-lasting nature of consequences.
- If you have consent to take a photo and/or draw an image, you do not necessarily have consent to distribute it. Even if you obtain consent from all of those impacted, there may still be legal and/or social/emotional consequences.

6.5

## RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

### Information Sharing

Under what circumstances (if any) would it be appropriate and safe to share the following things over social media? What social media platforms would you share these on (e.g., Tumblr, Facebook, Texting, SnapChat, YouTube, etc.) What would you need to know about the other person or the potential followers/audience? How do you control its distribution? Discuss in your group and write down some notes for each.

- Your screen name or handle

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- Your age

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- The name of your school

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- The name of your street

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- The names of your friends

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- Your phone number

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- A photo of your pet

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- A video of yourself playing sports

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- A photo of yourself in underwear

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- A photo of your friend in their underwear

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## Social and Digital Media Scenarios

### Scenario A

Beck posts a picture drunk at a party with the caption “Drunk out of my mind! #BestJobEver” on a social media account not directly linked to Beck’s name. The photo was liked by many friends and circulated among students, often tagging Beck in their reposts.

During summer break, Beck applied for a job as a life guard. The manager searched all the candidates and found the drunken selfie on the Internet. Someone else was hired for the job.

- Put yourself into the shoes of Beck’s employer and ask: What might have happened to Beck’s application?
- Now, put yourself into Beck’s shoes and come up with an action plan. What can Beck do now?

### Scenario B

Ty’s friend PJ forwards a video that they secretly took of their ex in the changing room. The ex is getting out of the shower. The message along with it says, “A liar and a cheater! Let’s see how you like public humiliation!”

Ty knows that PJ has been in a lot of pain about the breakup and that the video was taken when the relationship was good and they were joking around.

Everyone involved in this scenario is 16 years old. Canadian law says that sexual images of those under 18 are “child pornography” and those who circulate it can be charged.

- What are the different issues to consider in this scenario?
- The video was taken consensually, with full knowledge by the ex. Is there a problem in sharing it?
- What are the options Ty has now?

### Scenario C

Mir was off sick from school for a few weeks. While spending many long days at home, Mir passed the hours online gaming. The game that Mir likes playing the most has hypersexualized content.

Back at school, Mir stays in the classroom playing the online game on their phone during recess and lunch breaks, ignoring their friends. At home, Mir is unable to close the game app to study. Mir feels like real life is boring and empty compared to being online. Mir also feels like people in real life are not as attractive or muscular as in the game. Mir is starting to worry about failing the grade.

- What is happening to Mir?
- What is the impact on Mir's real life friendships/relationships?
- What can Mir do? How can Mir's friends and family lend support?

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## EDUCATOR ANSWER KEY—SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA SCENARIOS

### Scenario A

Beck posts a picture drunk at a party with the caption “Drunk out of my mind! #BestJobEver” on a social media account not directly linked to Beck’s name. The photo was liked by many friends and circulated among students, often tagging Beck in their reposts.

During summer break, Beck applied for a job as a life guard. The manager searched all the candidates and found the drunken selfie on the Internet. Someone else was hired for the job.

- Beck’s application might have been considered for the job but upon finding the drunken selfie, the employer reconsidered. This might have been compounded by the hashtag #BestJobEver, as the prospective employer might have thought that Beck likes to get drunk on the job. Despite the context surrounding the drunken selfie and hashtag, to an outside observer (and especially a prospective employer), this kind of social media post raises a lot of red flags.
- Beck might not be able to influence this perspective employer but Beck could prevent something similar from happening in the future. Beck’s action plan could start with going through all social media accounts and deleting any photos showing parties, alcohol, or any intoxicated selfies. Going forward, Beck could decide not to post anymore photos that might look bad or questionable to future employers, even photos with social media privacy settings enabled.



### Scenario B

Ty’s friend PJ forwards a video that they secretly took of their ex in the changing room. The ex is getting out of the shower. The message along with it says, “A liar and a cheater! Let’s see how you like public humiliation!”

Ty knows that PJ has been in a lot of pain about the breakup and that the video was taken when the relationship was good and they were joking around.

Everyone involved in this scenario is 16 years old. Canadian law says that sexual images of those under 18 are “child pornography” and those who circulate it can be charged.

- There are legal and social issues to consider in this scenario. Canadian law classifies any sexual images of those under 18 as child pornography and any person who circulates such pictures can be charged. In this context, PJ could be charged under child pornography laws. If Ty decides to share the video, Ty could also be charged under child pornography laws. Sharing a nude photo without the person's consent is also a violation of the person's right to privacy and bodily autonomy. Sharing this kind of photo without consent is considered sexual harassment and a form of cyberbullying. Sexual harassment and cyberbullying are not necessarily punishable in a court of law but there are consequences unique to schools and school boards, such as suspension and expulsion.
- Even though the video was filmed consensually, sharing it without consent is a violation of the person's right to privacy and bodily autonomy. Sharing it without consent is compounded by the intention behind the sharing, which is to purposely hurt the other person through name calling, shame, and humiliation.
- Ty has a number of options. First, Ty could delete the video without sharing it. Second, Ty could confront PJ about the video, asking PJ to delete the video before sharing it with anyone else. Third, Ty could encourage PJ to seek help in dealing with the breakup. Fourth, Ty could tell a teacher, or another adult they trust, about the video and ask for help intervening with PJ.



### Scenario C

Mir was off sick from school for a few weeks. While spending many long days at home, Mir passed the hours online gaming. The game that Mir likes playing the most has hypersexualized content.

Back at school, Mir stays in the classroom playing the online game on their phone during recess and lunch breaks, ignoring their friends. At home, Mir is unable to close the game app to study. Mir feels like real life is boring and empty compared to being online. Mir also feels like people in real life are not as attractive or muscular as in the game. Mir is starting to worry about failing the grade.

- Mir might be developing an addiction to online gaming.
- The impact on Mir's real-life friendships and relationships could be damaging. By ignoring their friends at school, Mir risks losing those friendships. By comparing people's attractiveness to that of the characters in the game, Mir risks having unrealistic standards of bodies and beauty, potentially leading to unsatisfactory relationships.



- Mir can talk to an adult that they trust about finding support to help manage the addiction and find tutoring to help bring their grades back up. Mir’s friends and family can lend support by being patient, compassionate, and kind, while setting clear expectations for Mir in terms of friendships, connection, and grades. Friends and family could also support Mir in setting clear boundaries around screen time, both at home and at school. (For more information on reducing harms associated with digital and social media use, see module 7.8).

## Social and Digital Media Safety Plan

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I feel empowered by social media when...

When I feel empowered, I can protect myself by...

I feel vulnerable or scared on social media when...

When I feel vulnerable or scared, I can talk to...