

5. GETTING THE BEST OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA



30 mins



OUTCOME:

Explore social media's impact in our lives and well-being.



MATERIALS:

Paper, pencil, depending on the type of presentation



BE PREPARED:

To facilitate discussion, check the Search Results below, about the positive and negative aspects of social media.

WHAT HAPPENS:

Social networks have always been part of human life. Our first ever social network is our family, friends and our school community.

There are other networks to which you might belong: It can be your Girls Guiding or Girl Scouting community, your musical team, your neighborhood etc. Every network affects you differently and shapes your beliefs, activities, worldviews, likes and dislikes.

Look at social media and you will see that you also have a social network there made of the people you know, which extends to the people your contacts are connected to. There are also the pages, groups and products you might follow. Social media is also a network and just as every other, it affects our lives, beliefs and well-being.

Although there are important risks using social media, we can also acknowledge that they can be used in positive ways to benefit our lives.

To be able to get the best out of them, we need to reflect on how we use them, what aspects of our lives are affected and how we can avoid negative impact or turn it into a positive outcome.

In groups, discuss how using social media touches and affects your life. Create a table with the following topics (you can add more if you like):

- Skills and learning barriers or opportunities
- Support & mental well-being
- Relationships
- Social issues & active citizenship
- Personal image & self-esteem
- Other risks or opportunities

Next to each topic try to think about any risks or negative effects of keeping a social media account. Write them down.

Then discuss and write in another column any benefits there are, as well as ways you could get the best out of your social media use. What do you have to do to make sure that it stays a positive and beneficial experience?

Narrow down your positives list to the 'Top 5 ways to make social media positive' to share with your group, your family or your school. You can create something by hand or with an online or computer tool.

5. GETTING THE BEST OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)



SEARCH RESULTS

Here are a few points to facilitate discussion during this activity:

Topic	Risks/Negative effects of social media	Benefits/Positive use of social media
Skills & learning	<p>Can hinder life skills such as interpersonal and communication skills, assertiveness and empathy, which can be refined and mastered through real life interactions, trial and error.</p> <p>Can lead to a decline in the ability to develop, grow, and succeed in important social arenas (work life, intimate relationships, and friendships).</p>	<p>Exploring and experimenting on social media can help you build digital knowledge and skills to enjoy online activities and avoid online risks.</p> <p>It can be a collaborative tool to share educational content, either informally or in formal school settings. Also, it is a means to find trainers and train in different skills (glass painting, plumbing, cooking, dress designing, carpentry etc.).</p> <p>You can learn about world events and current affairs outside of your immediate environment. You get in touch with different perspectives and worldviews, broaden connection and understanding of the world.</p>
Support & mental well-being	<p>Studies have found a strong link between heavy social media use and an increased risk of depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts.</p> <p>A study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram increases feelings of loneliness.</p>	<p>Social media can provide a place to seek support when we are going through something that we cannot talk to those close to us about. Support networks that you could turn to may be based on shared interests – for example, for people with a disability or medical conditions, who are same-sex attracted, or from particular cultural backgrounds.</p>
Relationships	<p>Real relationships need one-on-one time: extended use of social media can make us reduce real world interactions and connections with people and natural environments.</p>	<p>Social media removes boundaries to develop connections: bonds with family and friends can grow stronger thanks to social media, especially when apart for long periods of time.</p>
Social change & active citizenship	<p>Social media has been accused of creating ‘slacktivists’: people desensitized to the social issues of our times who tend to be more informed and ‘like’ the causes, but never take action to make change happen.</p>	<p>By connecting with others on social media, you could be better equipped to be an active citizen in society. You can use it to campaign for social good and raise awareness of a particular cause that is important to your local or global community. It can be a great first step before calling to action in real life.</p>

5. GETTING THE BEST OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)



SEARCH RESULTS

Topic	Risks/Negative effects of social media	Benefits/Positive use of social media
Personal image & self-esteem	Being constantly exposed to unattainable beauty standards & the image myth, damages self-esteem and gives us a twisted perspective of how we 'should' look.	Taking part in local and global online communities can help you explore your identity, give you a sense of connection and belonging and can make you feel represented and heard.
Other risks/ Opportunities	Inappropriate, upsetting or distressing content. Can leave you open to online harassment, like cyberbullying. Risk of sharing personal information with strangers – for example location. Sometimes data or personal images are being used without our knowledge by organizations or other people.	Can be used as an extension of our offline and face-to-face interactions. Removes the boundaries of meeting and staying in touch with people and forming bonds beyond borders.

TIP!

Age restrictions online are there to stop you seeing something you really don't want to see. If a page says '13+' or '18+', log off and tell your parent/carers.

TIP!

Don't like what someone is saying? Hit block!