



Navigating Social Media

Materials:

- Worksheet

Brainstorm: What forms of social media do you use? Why do you use social media? Do you have any personal rules around using social media? How do you know if what you see and read on social media is true?

Discuss: Did you know that most teens are on social media 9 hours a day! That's a third of your life! And I'm sure you've all noticed that that time can just disappear while you're scrolling through a social media site. There are lots of good ideas around some basic rules for social media use, like scheduling time and setting timers, being purposeful about what you're doing, refrain from comparing yourself to others, being careful about what you post (if you wouldn't want your Grandma to see it, don't post it), and if you find that you're feeling down, stressed or anxious, put it away and go do something you enjoy. But, today, we're going to talk about something that has come up more recently around the use of social media. The issue is information from social media - what is true and what is false. It's difficult to separate fact from fiction, but we're going to try.

Dive in! There is so much information at our fingertips today. In the past, we used to rely upon publishers, editors and experts to determine for us what was "real" and what was "fake". Today, the internet provides us with both true and false information and it is left up to us to determine which is which. So, how do we figure it out? We need to become detectives and try to understand where the information is coming from, or who the information is coming from. Next we need to determine whether that source of information might be biased. Bias is leaning towards or against a thing, person or group, which is often considered unfair. An example of bias might be an article proclaiming that sugar is not detrimental to your health but it is written by a company that makes cookies and cakes. Sugar might not be bad for your health, but you would feel more confident in trusting the information if it was written by the Food and Drug Administration. The fact that it was written by a Cookie and Cake manufacturer, lends a level of suspicion that the article might not be accurate because it is in their best interest if you believe that their products are safe and good for you. Sometimes something that seems true or is a news article, is actually a paid advertisement. Other times, information that is contained in an



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article is suspect or biased. There are some social media sites that try to make it clear where the information has come from. Do you know how to recognize this notification? For example some sites label an advertisement as “sponsored content”. We have to become as savvy as the people who are creating this information and trying to pass it off as factual.

Activity Ensure that everyone in the class has access to a smartphone, tablet or computer. In small groups, have students look through their social media feeds looking for examples of factual information AND fake information. When each group has a factual and a fake example, share their findings on the board and ask the class if they agree or disagree with the results.

Reflect: Prior to this class, how often did I mistake fake information as fact? How does this information influence my thoughts on important issues? How does it influence my behavior? How do I determine what is a trusted resource and what is not?

Professional Development

How am I influenced by “news” on social media? Am I being discerning about the “news” that I consume? Do I know how the social media sites that I use indicate whether or not the information is from a trusted source?