



Ditching the Digital Drama

Materials:

- Worksheet

Note: This lesson may take more than one class period to complete.

Brainstorm

In the previous lesson, we talked about situations where you might need to use your problem solving skills and refusal strategies. Today, we're going to talk about a different situation that still requires using some of those skills. By a show of hands, how many of you have had to deal with digital drama?

Discuss

I'm going to read the following statistics to you from [DoSomething.org](https://dosomething.org). Read each sentence and then give students a few minutes to respond and react.

- 37% of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have been bullied online and 30% have had it happen more than once.
- 23% of students reported that they've said or done something mean or cruel to another person online.
- Girls are more than twice as likely than boys to be both victims and perpetrators of online abuse.
- 60% of young people have witnessed online bullying. Most do not intervene.
- Only 1 in 10 teen victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse, however over 80% of students say they would help if they could do it anonymously.

Dive in!

In this lesson, we're going to approach digital drama in two ways: First, we're going to think about the role we play in creating the drama. Then, we'll tackle what we can do if we witness digital drama. Let's start with accepting our own responsibility for creating digital drama. Most of us have been in a situation where we have said or done something in the heat of the moment that wasn't kind. Maybe you noticed some friends out having fun without you and said something mean about a post. Or you reacted negatively to a new look a friend debuted on social media. It's important to remember that when you put something online, you can't take it back. And those hurtful words can quickly escalate out of control or have consequences that you don't intend. So before you do anything, remember to **THINK** before you post! Ask yourself:



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T: Is it True?

H: Is it Helpful?

I: Is it Inspiring?

N: Is it Necessary?

K: Is it Kind?

Of course, there may be situations where something might be true, but not kind. For example, a friend gets a new haircut that you don't really like. What should you do? Generally, speaking, if you're not sure; then the answer is probably that you shouldn't say something. And if you want to be sure, you can always wait a day to send the text or make the post.

Let's move onto the second part of the lesson. It can be really hard to stand up when you see something wrong. Not only is saying something the right thing to do, in some places it's required by law. You can help a victim by being an upstander. An upstander is someone who witnesses bullying and intervenes. This doesn't mean you're expected to stop the bully; there are other ways you can make a difference. Let's look at some examples.

Activity

Distribute the Worksheet to students. Review each of the strategies in the left hand column and review the scenario 1 example. Then pair students and have them work together to decide how they could be an upstander in scenario 2. If time permits, have student volunteers share their responses.

Reflect

Ask students to respond to the prompts at the bottom of the worksheet.

Extend and Enrich

- StopBullying.gov has videos for students on how to be an upstander: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/bystanders-to-bullying>
- Review local school/district rules about bullying, including cyberbullying, with students and provide resources for anonymously reporting bullying behavior.
- For additional lessons on Digital Citizenship, check out the free resources from Common Sense Media at: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship>.



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Professional Development

Studies show that when adults react quickly and swiftly to bullying, it can reduce it over time. Do you demonstrate to students that bullying is not acceptable? If not, how can you improve? What are the laws about bullying in your district?

Optional Home Connection → Send the following communication to students' families via email or text: Take a few moments today to check in with your student on their technology habits. How long are they spending using a screen? What are their favorite social media apps? Who are they chatting with? How do people treat each other online?