Examine how stereotypes and expectations seep into students digital lives, with a particular focus on how social networking and digital media are a vehicle for youth to construct their identities.

Discuss what constitutes a healthy digital relationship versus an unhealthy digital relationship Examine the impacts that media and technology have on their expectations and relationships.

NOTES TO FACILITATORS:

For Activity #1, you will need to show an example of a stranger’s Facebook profile page. The simplest way to do this is to search “Facebook profile page” in Google Images, then select the image of the profile that you wish to show the class.

For Activity #3, you may wish to include additional examples of caring versus controlling behaviour, particularly if there is a trend or situation that you know of that has impacted your students.

MATERIALS Copies of the following handouts:

o Facebook Profile Analysis (3.1 Handout) o Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like (3.2 Handout) o Caring or Controlling (3.3 Handout) o Thinking Critically – Exit Card (3.4 Handout)

Board, SMART Board, or chart paper

ACTIVITY #1: PERCEPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Strategy: Graphic Organizer

Provide students with a copy of the handout Facebook Profile Analysis (3.1 Handout). Tell students that you are going to show them a Facebook profile and you want them to look at the image and answer the first three questions on their graphic organizer. Give students about 5 minutes to complete this activity.

Once students have completed the graphic organizer, have them work in pairs to compare their thoughts. Tell students to use the Plus-Minus-Interesting graphic organizer at the bottom of their page to write out what they had that was the same as their partner, what they had that was different, and what was interesting about how they each perceived the Facebook profile. Ask some pairs to share their responses.

Students will have noticed different things and will have perceived different things based on their own experiences. Remind the class our own experiences and perceptions can impact our judgments on people. Tell students that the stereotypes and expectations from their media consumption will seep into their digital lives. They should remember that social networking and digital media are ways that youth can construct their own identities. What we see on Facebook or on the Internet is a construction. People choose what they show and what they write. We need to be critical consumers and not make judgments based on what we see online.

ACTIVITY #2:

HEALTHY DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS (20 MINUTES)

Strategy: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like

Introduce the next activity by telling students that just because our digital lives are a construction, it doesn’t mean that what we do digitally is not real. Far too often, youth do not associate their real world expectations and boundaries when they are navigating their electronic world. The representation of youth in the media, particularly about healthy relationships, impacts their beliefs and opinions about healthy relationships.

Put students into small groups and provide each student with a copy of Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like (3.2 Handout). Assign each one of the three headings, Looks Like or Sounds Like or Feels Like, to complete. Each student should record the responses on their copy of the handout so they have it in their notes for later.

Students will be thinking about healthy and unhealthy digital relationships as they complete the handout.

Once everyone is done, take it up as a class. Start by asking the Looks Like group to share their thoughts about healthy digital relationships, then have students make connections to unhealthy digital relationships. Repeat the process for Sounds Like and Feels Like. Use Digital Relationships – Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like Reference (3.2 Reference) when taking up student responses. As students are giving their answers, record the responses on a master copy of the handout, either using a SMART Board or chart paper. Students should complete their handout using the responses generated by their classmates.

Debrief by explaining that sometimes in digital relationships we want to share a lot of personal things, but we can risk sharing too much. There is a difference between sharing personal details about yourself and sharing passwords or information that gives people access to information that others share in confidence with you.

ACTIVITY #3: CARING OR CONTROLLING? (20 MINUTES)

Strategy: Myths and Facts & Graphic Organizer

Sometimes we can confuse controlling behaviour with caring behaviour and it is important that youth learn and understand the difference. Tell students that you will read a scenario aloud to the class, then they will answer a series of questions and respond whether they think the behaviour was caring or controlling.

Provide students with a copy of the handout Caring or Controlling (2.3 Handout). Tell students to work independently and that their answers will not be shared. This will be a personal activity and when it is taken up, they will review the answers on their paper for their own learning.

Read the following scenario to the class. This scenario is also on the top of their handout:

o Jasmine started dating Malcolm a few months ago. Jasmine is always telling her best friend Kiara that she thinks it is sweet how much Malcolm texts her and keeps in touch. The other day, Kiara and Jasmine were eating lunch together in the cafeteria when Malcolm stormed up and demanded to see Jasmine’s

        

phone. Startled, Jasmine asked why. Malcolm said that he’d been texting her for the past fifteen minutes and she hadn’t bothered to respond.

Ask students to think to themselves about this scenario. Is Malcolm caring or is Malcolm controlling? They should complete the quiz below, then once again consider their opinion on the behaviour Malcolm is displaying in the scenario. Take up the answers to the activity using Caring or Controlling – Reference (3.3 Reference). Remind students that their answers are private and this is an activity to get them thinking about their digital boundaries what is healthy digital communication in a dating relationship.

Conclude this activity by telling students that a healthy relationship allows partners to still be independent and have their own space. Checking up on someone, constantly texting or messaging them, or asking for private things like passwords or semi-nude pictures are all forms of digital harassment. Sometimes these behaviours might make you think that your partner is caring or concerned for your well-being, but they are really examples of jealousy, controlling and possessive behaviours.

Debrief by explaining to students that there is a big difference between caring and controlling. Just like in real life when you want your space and don’t need to be with your friends or boyfriend/girlfriend all the time, the same applies digitally. Remind students to set and stay firm about their digital boundaries. If someone is pressuring them, making them feel smothered, or disrespecting them in any way, it is time to have a discussion about it and set healthy boundaries in the relationship.

CONCLUSION:

THINKING CRITICALLY (15 MINUTES)

Strategy: Graphic Organizer, Exit Card

Tell students that just like they have to evaluate what is caring versus controlling behaviour in their relationships, they also have to evaluate the impact of media on their relationship expectations, on their perspective of how life should be, and on their decisions. Remind students that media is constructed, so it is that construction of our entertainment that they need to learn to critically consume. Media influences us but when we think critically and evaluate what we’re watching, doing, using, and reading, we stay in control.

To conclude, provide students with a copy of the exit card, Thinking Critically – Exit Card (3.4 Handout). Students should complete the handout individually. The completed handout can be submitted for review by the facilitator to ensure students understood the concepts presented in this mini-unit. In addition, it will also provide the facilitator with information about next steps for further developing critical media literacy.

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