![iKeepCurrent Generation Safe NewsFeed logo]

LESSON 17:
Social Networks and Chat Rooms

Purpose
Students will engage in activities that will promote appropriate participation in chat rooms and social networking sites.

Key concepts
- Never share personal or private information
- Build a positive online reputation
- Be considerate and kind
- Maintain balance/learn to recognize addiction

Grades: Appropriate for Grades 8-12   **Time Required**: 30-45 minutes

Preparation

Equipment needed: Internet access, projector and screen to show the 'Privacy and Reputation Online' video. *(Note: to watch the video you will need access to YouTube.)*

Lesson presentation: [link to ppt]

Vocabulary

Chat Room –an online space where people communicate by sending text messages or videochat to people in the same room in real-time. Chat rooms involve multiple users.

Social Networking site – an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building social networks or social relations among people who share interests and/or activities.

Lesson Development
Introduction or Attention Activity

Ask students for a show of hands to each question. How many of you are on Facebook?

It looks like xx% *(estimate the percentage of students in the class using Facebook)* of you are on Facebook.

Ask students: Why do you think people participate in social networking? *Listen for answers, making sure that they consider information like someone's age, interests, and whether the information is positive or*

negative. Tell students: As you know, Facebook is just one of many social networking sites. Today we are going to discuss best practices while using these sites as well as while participating in chat rooms.

Lesson

Chat rooms and social networking sites have many positive benefits. But, there are also risks involved. Everyone who participates must be careful with what they post. Participants must also remember to balance their screen time with other activities.

Defining concepts

1. What are chat rooms?
Ask, "How many of you use chat rooms? How would you describe them?" In a nutshell, chat rooms are an online space for people to share information (usually of a common interest) via text or videochat in real time with a group of other uses. They were one of the first ways people communicated dynamically online. In general, they differ from instant messaging programs because they are conducive to large groups of people rather than just one-on-one communication. Chat room users typically share common interests.

2. What are other social networking sites?
Social Networking sites are online places where students spend time together. There are sites for younger children (like WoogiWorld, Club Penguin and Webkinz) and sites for those 13 and older (like Facebook). Generally, the sites are pretty simple. Each user creates a profile describing themselves and can use the platform to publish content, exchange public or private messages, and list other users or groups that they are connected to. *Ask, "What do you think some of the most popular social networking sites are?" (Possible answers include: Facebook, YouTube, Google +, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.)*

How can you use these sites responsibly?

Social media offers many positive benefits. In fact, a recent study found that using Facebook usually *increases* face-to-face socializing.[1] Social networks and chat rooms encourage students to collaborate with one another and to express their creativity. They are exciting places to learn new things, build and strengthen relationships, and stay in touch with friends from around the world.

 Ask, "Why do you like social networking sites?"

However, there are a few important things to remember when using these sites:

1. Never share personal or private information:

Everything posted online is public and permanent. There *is* such thing as TMI (too much information) and it includes sharing your:
- Location: You will need to disable Geotagging (GPS coordinates of your location). If you use a smart phone, you must turn off the setting that attaches coordinates to your photos.
- Personal thoughts that you don't want broadcasted to your whole friend list (or friends of your friends)
- Phone number and address

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[1] BYU Study: Facebook use increases interpersonal communication.

- Social security number and credit card information

Remember, the internet is a public place and not the place for you to discuss your private information.

2. Build a positive online reputation

What you post online is not only public, it is also permanent. The comments, pictures, and videos you post about yourself contribute to your online reputation and will follow you for many years to come, and may be used either for or against you when you apply to college or future jobs—75% of recruiters and HR professionals in the U.S said they have rejected candidates based on information they found online.[2] Take care to make your online reputation an asset, not a liability.

Watch this video together: Privacy and Reputation Online
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Oumfi7Rhg]

3. Be considerate and kind:

It is becoming all too common for social networking sites to become places of "drama." Posting negative, cruel, or embarrassing comments can have serious consequences and may lead to tragic outcomes. So be kind, even if others are not. Don't let a bully suck you into their bad behavior. The golden rule applies to never say or do something to someone that you wouldn't want them to say or do to you.

Ask, "Have you ever noticed unkind comments on social networking sites or in chat rooms?" 88% of social media-using teens have witnessed cruelty on social network sites.[3] If you notice this behavior, be an upstander rather than a bystander and do something about it. Your example can make a tremendous impact in changing social norms.

Give students a moment to think this through on a personal level. Ask them to brainstorm a list of action steps they might take if they see something unkind on social networking sites or in chat rooms.

4. Maintain balance /learn to recognize addiction

Because social networks and chat rooms are useful and engaging—and good at holding our attention—it can be tempting to use these sites all the time. Using these sites too often or for hours on end can interfere with other important activities (like sleeping, eating meals with family, and physical activity). The same study that showed Facebook facilitates offline social activities also found that for every one-hour increase on a social networking site, there was a .05 decrease in GPA!

It is helpful to pre-determine how much time to spend on these sites; some students decide not to login more than a few times a week and others decide to limit themselves to a certain time period each day. Whatever you decide with your parents, be sure to stick to so that you have the chance to fill your time with other activities.

Wrap-Up

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[2] Johnston, Stuart J. "Microsoft Survey: Online 'Reputation' Counts." 27 January 2010.
[3] Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, Rainie (2011)

Remember, social networking sites and chat rooms aren't good or bad—they are neutral. It is how we choose to use them that will determine whether or not we ultimately have a positive or negative experience. What you choose to post, how you interact with others, and how much time you spend on these platforms will be pivotal for your future success.