

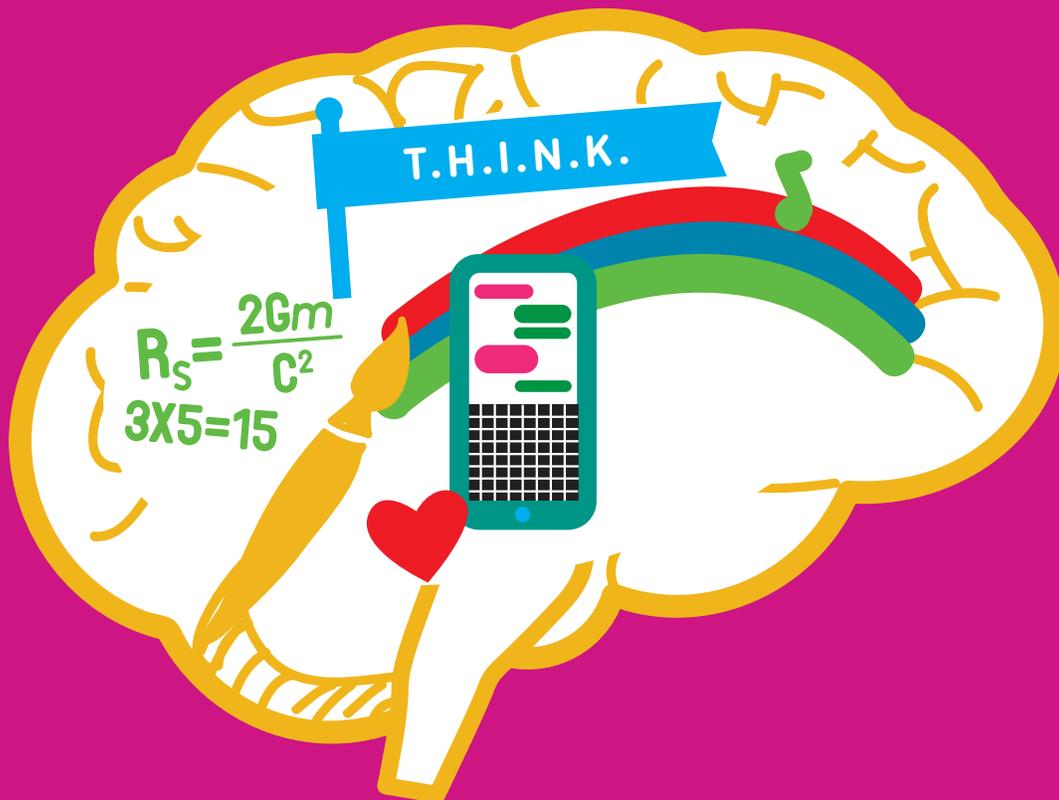


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Lesson:

Think

Before You Speak, Post, or Hit Send



BACKGROUND

The words we choose to speak everyday or post online have the power to build others up or tear them down. They can impact the way others view us and our **interpersonal relationships** at school, work, and home. When we speak before thinking or post something inappropriately online, it can have lasting **consequences** on our reputations and affect the reputations of others.

PREPARATION

- Read through *younger* child activity. Then prepare “Think it, Say It” paper and word strips.
- Read through the *older* child activity and create a pretend profile or be prepared to discuss the sample one below.
- Think about a time that you spoke before you should have and be prepared to discuss with your child what resulted from that situation.

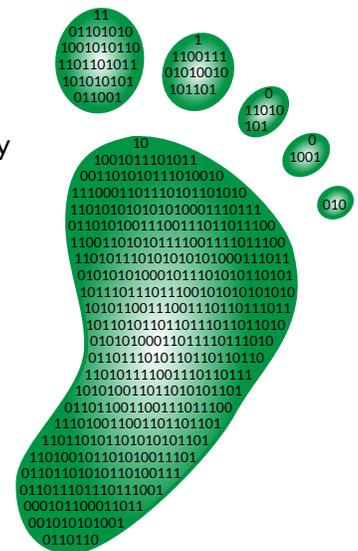
OBJECTIVE

- Help your child develop strategies to help them “think” before they speak, post, or send anything online.
- Discuss with your child what a **digital footprint** is and why it matters.
- Encourage your child to think about what the words they choose to use, say about them as an individual.

LESSON

It is important to remember that what we say to others, and the information we post online are reflections of who we are. There will be many times in our lives where what we say and how we say it will determine the outcome of situations we find ourselves in.

Our words and posts create either positive or negative **ripples**, or small waves of change. They can influence others perceptions, our own thinking and the future course of our lives. Once we say something, it can be very hard to take it back, and when we post something online it is permanent. All of the comments we leave on social media, app use, texts, and email records are part of what is called our digital footprint and contribute to the portrait of who we are online.



ACTIVITY

Have kids squeeze out a tube of toothpaste into a dish, then instruct them to put the toothpaste back in the tube. It is impossible. Draw the comparison of the toothpaste to our speech and online activity.

DISCUSSION

If we are impulsive with our speech and online posting we can work to change that. One way to break the habit of speaking before thinking or posting information online that is unnecessary, is to use the **T.H.I.N.K.** acronym (Elsey, 2017). Each letter in the acronym can be used to help us evaluate what we are saying or posting.

The first letter **“T” stands for true**. Before we speak or post it is important to make sure we are not spreading gossip or sharing false information. The second letter **“H” stand for helpful**. Does the information you are sharing help you, them, or the situation?

The third letter **“I” stands for inspiring or improve**. Does what you are going to say or post improve on the silence or inspire you or someone else to be better. The fourth letter **“N” stand for necessary**. Is what you are sharing necessary information for someone to know? Or would it better be left unsaid?

The last and final letter in the acronym is **“K.” This letter stands for kind**. What is our motivation for sharing? Are we trying to do it to be helpful or hurtful? When we are able to use this acronym in our communication we will find that we don’t have to worry about what we say or post, and that we will be more effective in our communication. Learning to control our speech and regulating what we post online will improve our lives and relationships in many areas.



QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- Should we always say everything we are thinking? Why or Why not?
- What can we ask ourselves if we are not sure if we should say something or not?
- What should we do if we say something that hurts someone?
- What should we do if someone says something that hurt us?

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

- Why do you think teens might be more comfortable through text and social media rather than face-to-face communication?
- Does an online environment reduce **inhibitions**? Is this problematic?
- Do teens have online personalities that are different from their “in real life” personalities?
- In what ways can online material “come back to haunt you” later in life?

ACTIVITES

Younger Children: (Activity from Think Before You Speak)

An activity that you can do with younger children, is to take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. At the top of the first column write, “Say It” at the top of the second column write, “Think It”. Next, prepare several slips of paper with different statements on them that they might think or say. Examples that they might think in their head but should not say out loud include phrases like; That’s a dumb idea, You’re annoying, I’m smarter than you, Get away from me. Examples that they might say to express themselves in a kinder, more helpful way include statements like, This idea might work better, I need some space, I’m not sure that answer is correct, I’m sorry, I don’t feel like playing right now.

After preparing the strips, place them in a brown paper bag and have the child draw a piece of paper out and ask them what column they think the statement belongs in. When they are done talk with them about how the “think it” statements might hurt someone.

Older Kids: (Activity from Think Before You Share)

Create a fake profile and have your child read through it. Then have them write down three words that they would use to describe the pretend person. After the activity talk with them about, how what they post online says a lot about them and can be viewed and interpreted by a larger and unfamiliar audience. Remind them that they want to make sure that they would be comfortable with future employers or family members viewing what they post online.

Example:

Relationship Status: It's complicated

Likes: Snapchat, Instagram, Zendaya, Sabrina Carpenter, Andi Mack, Austin Mahone

Dislikes: Five Seconds of Summer, family vacations, homework, football, chores, my teachers!!!, Susie #eastjuniorhighschool“ worst 8th grader ever!!

Comments: Go look at my post on instagram #instadaily #photography #follow

Cheated on math test today #feeling lucky

Spent 8 hours on twitch today #copyandpastehomework

Jason is such a hottie #waiting

rocking the leopard print and slouchy boots #KedellJennerStyle

Games: Fortnite Pub G

Another activity that you can do with your teens to share examples of how posts on social media have backfired, costing people their jobs and reputations. If you don't know of any of your own, here are some from [North Eastern University](#).

FOLLOW UP FOR PARENTS

- Parents can help their children learn to think before they speak by helping them to develop the skill of self control. Being able to regulate what we say and do takes a good deal of self control. Children have varying abilities of self control depending on their age. When helping children develop self-control skills, try setting up simple goals that they can succeed at. For example, pre-schoolers, goals might include not interrupting or not fighting on the playground. For an early elementary school student, appropriate goals might be following bedtime rules or showing frustration appropriately. Teens can practice exhibiting self control by completing chores or homework before having screen time.
- Parents can also have a big impact on helping their child to think about what they post online and their digital footprint. They can teach their child what it means to be a good digital citizen and how to be safe on the internet. Parents can find apps to help them monitor their children's internet and technology usage, but it is also necessary to teach them how to monitor themselves. As we encourage our children to use screen time for good, they will become better digital citizens and stronger members of society. We can help them to have confidence and to stand for the things they believe with courage, compassion and hope.

RELATED DISCUSSION

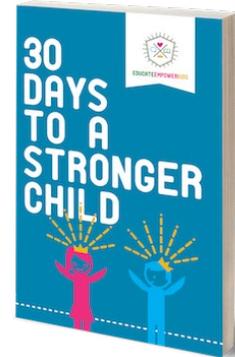
All of these topics can be found in the book [Noah's New Phone](#) on [Amazon](#):

- Kindness
- CyberBullying
- Digital Citizenship



All of these topics can be found in [30 Days to a Stronger Child](#) on [Amazon](#):

- Friendship
- Respect
- Community
- Empathy



RELATED ARTICLES, LESSONS, AND BOOKS

[Is Your Teenager a Fake? Four Steps to Creating Authenticity On and Off Social Media](#)

[Teach Your Kids About Online Ripples: Our Actions Always Matter](#)

[5 Ways Kids Can Use Smartphones for Good](#)

[A Lesson About Using Technology for Good](#)

[Lesson: Kindness: Online, Face to Face, and Everywhere](#)

[Noah's New Phone: A Story About Using Technology For Good](#)

GLOSSARY

Interpersonal Relationships: Social connections with others. They can be brief or enduring.

Consequence: The result or effect of an action or condition.

Reputation: Overall quality or character as seen or judged by people: esteem or regard

Digital Footprint: The information about a particular person that exists on the Internet as a result of their online activity.

Inhibitions: A feeling that makes one self-conscious and unable to act in a relaxed and natural way.

Profile: (On a social media website or application) a user's summary of their personal details or current situation.

Ripples: All of our actions online and in "real life" create ripples, or small waves of change around us. Each time we text, send an email, post on social media, interact with others on a game, or create a new piece of technology, we create ripples.

CITATIONS

Elsy, E. (2017, May 15). THINK Acronym for Kinder and More Effective Communications (Infographic). Retrieved from <https://www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/think-acronym-for-kinder-and-more-effective-communications/>

Social Media – Your Online Reputation. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.northeastern.edu/securenu/social-media-your-online-reputation/>

Think before you Share. (n.d.). Retrieved July 3, 2018, from <https://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en/safety-center/files/think-activity-examples.pdf>

Think Before You Speak. (2017, June 22). Retrieved from <https://www.centervention.com/think-before-you-speak/>