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Lesson:

Teaching

Social Media Literacy

The Illusions Among Us



BACKGROUND

The social media penetration rate in North America is at 70%. Worldwide, the average rate is 42% (Social Media: Worldwide penetration rate 2018, n.d.).

Just like in other media, the images portrayed on **social media** are often unattainable because of photoshop, filters, posing, or staging. We live in a world saturated with illusions--people on TV, movies, billboards, and magazine covers all represent false realities. In many ways, social media is no different. It's unrealistic to expect to always look your best because you see people on social media who look that way.

Another issue that arises in social media consumption is the expectation that life should always be fun, happy, and full of excitement. This is a lie that social media would have us believe. People constantly post about their fun experiences and omit the rest, leaving others to feel their own life is boring. Everyone has mundane days and that is part of life. Like other forms of media, all pictures in social media are constructed. Help your children to understand that the edited photos and exciting lives shown on social media are not an accurate portrayal of their everyday life.

PREPARATION

- Review the objective and understand why it is important to talk to your child about being social media literate.
- Think about how social media has altered the way you think about reality.
- Recognize that most people in social media will show their best angle, use the best filter, or zoom in on the best part of their reality.
- Recognize that most people posting in social media talk themselves up to make their lives out to be more exciting than they really are.
- Remember that people come in different shapes and sizes. It's not important to fall into a certain category. Beauty isn't

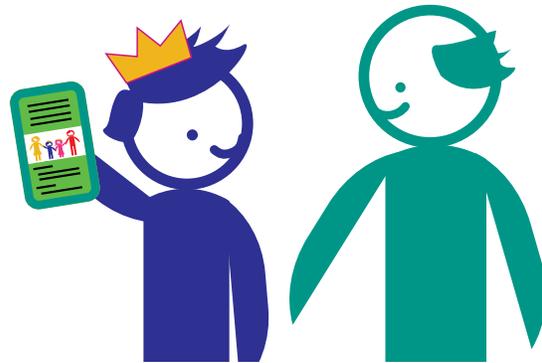


defined by what shape or size you are.

- Remember that everyone has different circumstances. Seeing someone with more privileges or fun experiences than you doesn't make them any more important.
- Familiarize yourself with glossary terms.

OBJECTIVE

Teach your child to “deconstruct” or take apart what they see or hear on social media. Help them to understand that all media can alter our perceptions of reality.



Media literacy is helping your kids to see that social media, like all media, has real and fake aspects that influence us. Help them find ways to counteract the negative, inappropriate, or unrealistic images that they kids see. Think about when and where your kids will see social media. Teach them to question what they see and how to combat the negative feelings that social media may give them.



LESSON

Discuss the unrealistic expectations that people have about how they should look and behave based on social media. Social media leads us to believe that life is always full of excitement and that people are flawless. This isn't a real or accurate portrayal of life. Talk about the expectations that your kids have of themselves because of social media. Discuss with them various images found on social media and their purpose.

ACTIVITIES

Visit different social media platforms (like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) with your teen or pre-teen. As you go through the feed, review multiple images and comments that people have posted. Teach your child how to **deconstruct** what you see by having them ask the following questions:

- 🗨️ Who posted this image or comment?
- 🗨️ What was their purpose in posting this?
- 🗨️ How does this image or comment make you feel?
- 🗨️ Does this image look realistic or has it been filtered?
- 🗨️ Is this picture candid or staged?
- 🗨️ Is this picture or comment appropriate for kids?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEEN

- 🗨️ How often do you go on social media? (Try to keep track of how much time you spend on social media. You too, parents!)
- 🗨️ How often do your peers discuss what is on social media?
- 🗨️ Do you feel like you need to be on social media to fit in?
- 🗨️ Do you think people would post a picture of themselves that is unattractive?
- 🗨️ Do you think people are **authentic** in their posts or do they only portray their best selves?
- 🗨️ What have you seen on social media that is unrealistic or causes you to have jealous feelings?

FOLLOW UP

Social media is most likely a part of your kids' everyday life. Make sure you are consistently reminding them of the unrealistic expectations and standards that it sets.

Once children learn how to be social media literate and think critically about the messages and images they see, they will be able to understand the purpose behind social media and realize that it isn't always an accurate portrayal of real life.

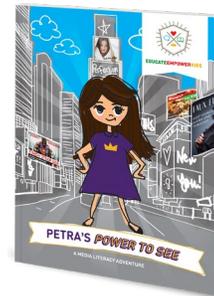
Remember to consistently discuss social media literacy with your kids and reiterate the principles in this lesson. This discussion can lead to many other important discussions like media savvy kids, body image, and self-worth.

RELATED DISCUSSIONS

A Simple Lesson for Teaching Your Child Media Literacy

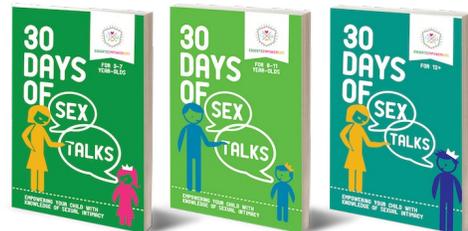
Books

Petra's Power to See: A Media Literacy Adventure



The following lessons are found in *30 Days of Sex Talks*, available on Amazon:

-  Being Media Savvy
-  Liking Yourself
-  Respecting Others
-  Self-worth/Self-esteem



GLOSSARY

Aspirational Character: A character aimed at or one who tries to appeal to people who want to attain a higher social position, an unreachable goal, or a better standard of living.

Authentic: Real and genuine. In this lesson, it is specifically related to being real and genuine online and on social media.

Body Image: An individual's feelings regarding their own physical attractiveness and sexuality. These feelings and opinions are often influenced by other people and media sources.

Deconstructing an Image: Breaking down an image or message into separate parts (words, images, body language, tone) to examine those parts critically and determine their individual meanings.

Media Literacy: The ability to analyze and evaluate media. People who are media literate can understand the messages they receive from radio, internet, television, magazines, books, billboards, video games, music and all other forms of media.

Self-Esteem/Self-Worth: An individual's overall emotional evaluation of their own worth; a judgment of the self and an attitude toward the self. A term typically used to describe the confidence in one's own value or abilities.

Social Media: Communication tools on the web that allow people to keep in contact by consuming and sharing information.

Social Media Literacy: The ability to analyze and evaluate social media. People who are social media literate understand what messages the images, comments, and videos in social media are trying to say.

CITATIONS

Nations, D. (2018, June 06). Serious Question: What Exactly Is Social Media? Retrieved June 15, 2018, from <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-social-media-explaining-the-big-trend-3486616>

Social media: Worldwide penetration rate 2018 | Statistic. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/269615/social-network-penetration-by-region/>

