

Teacher Institute for Neuroscience and Society

LESSON PLAN

# Social Media & Me

 Suggested Duration

45-90 min

 Grade Level

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

 Topic

Social Media; Health

## Summary

Students will develop a shared understanding of what **social media** is.

They will then explore the **benefits** and **risks** of social media use on **adolescent health and well-being**.

## Prerequisites

- Basic understanding of the internet and digital technology.
- Familiarity with common social media platforms (e.g. TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube.)
- Understanding of what constitutes personal information.
- Openness to reflect on safe and healthy habits.

With support from  Dana Foundation

## NGSS Science Standards

**NYS NGSS MS-ETS1-1:** Define the criteria and constraints of a design problem.

**NYS NGSS MS-ETS1-3:** Analyze data to determine similarities and differences among several design solutions.

**NYS NGSS MS-LS1-8:** Gather and synthesize information to communicate solutions about how organisms are affected by their environment.

## NGSS Writing Standards

**WHST1a:** Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

**WHST1b:** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic by identifying and using credible sources.

## NGSS Writing Standards

Constructing Explanations

Engaging in Argument from Evidence

## Essential Questions

- How does social media use impact the adolescent brain?
- How does the design of social media platforms, like the use of likes and notifications, affect brains and behavior?
- What are some potential positive and negative effects of social media use on the mental well-being of adolescents?

## Learning Objectives

### All students will...

- Identify what social media is and name the role social media plays in their lives.
- Analyze the positive and negative effects of social media.
- Reflect on how social media impacts their self perception and mental well-being.
- Recognize and manage “red flag feelings” experienced while using social media.

### Advanced students will...

- Identify the potential risks and opportunities associated with their online presence.
- Evaluate their own online presence and consider how it reflects their character and values.

## Materials

### Downloadable Lesson Components

- Foundation and Introduction Do Now Worksheet
- Social Media & Me Class Activity Packet
- Powerpoint (student facing)

### Supplies

- Timer
- Pens/pencils/markers
- Pre- printed risk level paper (printed in color)
- Large chart paper
- Optional: green, yellow, and red sticky notes

## References

- “Surgeon General warns of social media danger to mental health”  
News clip from the Today Show  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SvqoaZzyVs&t=4s>
- Stavros Niarchos Foundation Brain Insight Lecture  
“Plugged into Adolescence: Brains, Bytes, and Behavior in Teens” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-0-0LPx3MU>
- “Is Social Media Good for Society?”  
TIME Magazine for Kids. Kids aged 7 to 11 respond to this question.  
<https://www.timeforkids.com/g34/social-media-debate/>

# INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## Introduction (Engage) • 10 MIN

The purpose of this task is to make connections between tools, function, and risks by using an example that students are familiar with. The goal is to establish the idea that a tool can be useful, but can also be dangerous/harmful if used improperly.

### Foundation and Do Now Worksheet

Teachers will...

- Implement Entry Protocol.
- Pass out **Do Now** Handout.
- Facilitate classroom Discussion.

Students will...

- Complete Do Now Activity.
- Engage in peer-to-peer discussion.
- Engage in Whole Class Discussion.

# INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Note:** Though it is at the Educator’s discretion, it is suggested that this lesson takes place offline. Offline learning, or traditional classroom-based education, offers several benefits for middle school students. These include enhanced face-to-face interaction, development of essential social skills, reduced distractions, and a structured learning environment. Offline learning fosters a sense of community, encourages teamwork, and allows for immediate feedback from teachers.

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## Part 1 (Engage) • 15 MIN

 Social Media and Me Class Activity Packet

Teachers will...

- Distribute Introduction slips with prompts:
  - **What is the function of social media?**
  - **In what ways can social media be useful?**
  - **In what ways could social media be dangerous/harmful?**
- Facilitate an entire class share-out (e.g., “Stand and Share” or “Turn and Talk”).
- Capture responses on chart paper.


Students will...

- Respond to the prompts individually.
- Share their thoughts with classmates.

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## Part 2 (Explore) Mini Lesson • 15-20 MIN

 Social Media and Me Class Activity Packet

 News clip from the Today Show

Teacher will...

- Distribute the class activity packet and guide students to the section on "What is Social Media."
- Present an academically accepted **definition of social media**.
- **Show a news clip** related to social media and instruct students to take **notes on three important facts**.
- Facilitate a whole-class discussion on the news clip reactions.

Students will...

- Take notes on the definition of social media and the news clip.
- Share their reactions in small groups and then with the whole class.

# INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## Part 3 (Explain) Activity: Level of Risk • 15-20 MIN

 Social Media and Me Class Activity Packet

Teacher will...

- Organize students into heterogeneous groups of 4.
- Distribute risk level cards and **instruct students to categorize social media uses as low, medium, or high risk.**
- Provide sentence starters to help students justify their categories.

Students will...

- Collaborate in groups to categorize social media uses and justify their decisions using sticky notes.
  - Share their group's reasoning with the class.
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## Part 4 (Elaborate) Class Exchange, Discussion • 30 MIN

Teacher will...

- Introduce a "Silent Discussion" protocol where students evaluate other groups' categories.
- Facilitate a **class discussion** to finalize risk categories based on group discussions and observations.

Students will...

- Walk around the classroom silently, observing other groups' work.
  - Discuss and make any necessary adjustments to their categories based on peer observations.
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## Closing (Evaluate) • 15-20 MIN

 Social Media and Me Class Activity Packet

Teacher will...

- Direct students to complete their class activity sheet.
- Provide an extension worksheet or allow silent reading if they finish early.
- Circulate the room to assist students and provide feedback.

Students will...

- Complete the class activity sheet, reflecting on their learning.
- Turn in their work before dismissal.

# INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

<b>Assessment or Deliverables</b>	Students will create a claim that assesses their understanding of social media’s functions, benefits, and potential risks and support their claim with evidence and reasoning brought forth during the class activity.
<b>Differentiation or Extension Activities</b>	To extend this activity, students can create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) promoting safe social media use.

# LESSON PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

## Suggested Background Information for the Teacher

- Social media plays a significant role in the lives of today's youth, influencing their communication, relationships, and self-perception. Understanding both the benefits and risks is essential for promoting healthy online behavior.
- Familiarize yourself with various social media platforms popular among middle school students (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat).
- Be prepared to address sensitive topics related to social media, such as cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and mental health implications.
- Encourage an open dialogue where students feel safe sharing their

## Possible Student Misconceptions

**All Social Media is Harmful:** Students may believe that social media is entirely negative and does not offer any benefits. Clarify that although there are risks, social media can also foster positive connections and communication.

**Anonymity Equals Safety:** Some students may think that being anonymous on social media protects them completely. Discuss that anonymity can create false security and can still lead to harmful situations.

**Social Media Equals Reality:** Students may not understand that social media often portrays a curated version of reality. Teach them to critically analyze what they see online.

# LESSON PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

## Glossary

<b>Anonymity</b>	The state of being unnamed or not identified, often used to describe the ability to remain unknown online.
<b>Cyberbullying</b>	The use of technology to harass, threaten, or humiliate someone.
<b>Digital Footprint</b>	The trace of data that individuals leave behind when using the internet, including social media activity, online purchases, and interactions with websites. This concept is relevant to discussions about privacy and data ethics.
<b>Platform</b>	A specific application or website that facilitates social media interactions (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
<b>Privacy</b>	The right to keep personal information safe and not shared without consent.
<b>Public Service Announcement (PSA)</b>	A message created to inform and educate the public about important issues, often intended to promote safety or health.
<b>Reflection</b>	The act of thinking deeply about one's experiences and choices to gain insight and understanding.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The process of evaluating potential risks associated with specific actions or activities.
<b>Social Media</b>	Internet-based platforms that allow users to create, share, and exchange information and content.
<b>Tool</b>	A device or implement used to carry out a particular function

# CROSS CUTTING CONCEPTS

## Social Media, Risk Assessment and Decision-Making

- By having students evaluate the risks and benefits of social media use promotes informed decision-making. Students learn to weigh consequences, fostering responsible behavior in digital spaces.
- The activity of assessing the benefits and risks of social media usage relates to health education (understanding personal safety), mathematics (analyzing data and statistics regarding online behavior), and ethics (exploring moral responsibilities in communication).

## Social Media, Digital Citizenship and Responsibility

- Helping students understand the concept of digital citizenship emphasizes the need for responsible behavior online, creating an awareness of one's role in the digital community and its impact on one's life outside of a digital space.
- The activity of reflecting on how social media impacts students' self-perception and mental well-being relates to civics (understanding rights and responsibilities), information technology (using tools responsibly), and communication studies (effective and ethical messaging).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Supported by:  Dana Foundation