



**KIDS LIKE ERIK ARE DYING EVERY SINGLE DAY**  
**STOP DEADLY ONLINE CHALLENGES**  
**SEE SOMETHING - SAY SOMETHING - SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE**  
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## TRAINING OVERVIEW

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# NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

*a vital addition to your digital well-being curriculum*

Developed by Stephanie Small, LMFT and Judy Rogg, MSW

### **Viral Social Media Challenges Can Be Lethal:**

There are many challenges across the internet, a majority of which pose risks to our kids. Arguably, perhaps the most viral of all proliferating challenges is also the deadliest: Pass-out challenges, which go by a myriad of names (including the choking game, blackout, passout, tapout, space monkey, flatliner), and which have been around for generations. Studies indicate that kids experiment with its intoxicating effects for non-sexual reasons (e.g., curiosity, peer pressure, and the mistaken belief that it is safer than drugs).

Millions of “how-to” videos flourish online, enticing kids to believe they are safe without any understanding of the dangers. And we now know that social media app algorithms intentionally target our youth with these challenges, encouraging kids to try them, record them and re-post them to be pushed out to other kids.

The “Navigating Social Media Challenges” module helps kids understand the dilemma they face with the reality that their apps choose what they see, why it’s hard for them to determine what is safe or dangerous without the help of a trusted adult, and offer specific strategies on how to say “No” to peer pressure. While it discusses pass out challenges as the “example” of a dangerous challenge, the material in the module applies to all challenges and dares.

### **Evidence-Based and Methodology:**

Our training has been developed on prevailing evidence-based best practices for prevention modules that currently address other risk topics. The program is founded upon the principles of basic brain science as well as understanding the impact of trauma. It ensures that potential to trigger pre-existing trauma is diminished while successfully imparting the crucial education. The potential for trauma is minimized by ensuring the material presented stays within the Window of Tolerance (as developed by Daniel Siegel, M.D.).

### **The Actual Training Program:**

Our training can be completed in a 45 – 60 minute classroom session and is scripted so it can easily be taught by any teacher or counselor comfortable with the material. It can also be presented as an assembly.

- Part One is an interactive dialogue using a guided PowerPoint to keep students involved. Information is conveyed in a thoughtful progression that draws students into the conversation, gradually diffusing any barriers and allowing them to absorb the material.
- Part Two is a brief video that gently restates the basics taught during the PowerPoint discussion and concludes with memorial slides of some actual victims, helping students understand that this is real and could happen to them.

By remaining faithful to our foundational principles, the training helps students understand the dangers of online challenges, where they are in their brain development, how they receive and process information, and why it is challenging for them to think through all the consequences without the guidance of a trusted adult.

**Teaching Objectives:**

- Learn the truth about social media apps choosing what kids see in their feeds
- Identify online challenges without showing them how to “play”
- Understand how their brains work and where they are in their own brain development
- Gain Knowledge about the physiological effects on the body
- Connect between risks online challenges and other risk behaviors
- Identify peer pressure
- Learn to say “No” effectively
- Make healthy choices
- Recognize that the risk is real
- Connect refusal skills and strategies learned in this lesson to deal with other situations as well

**Attributes of our Training Module that Meet School District Standards:**

- Avoids the use of any graphic and/or explicit material
- Minimizes the risk of triggering a potential trauma based on a student’s psychological history
- Diminishes school district exposure to potential litigation
- Provides factual information to help students understand the dangers of these activities without discussing or showing how they are played
- Includes specific tools to help students resist peer pressure effectively
- Empowers students to make better choices
- Instills common-theme strategies to help students avoid challenging situations
- Offers new approaches for students to open dialogues with their parents
- Flexible format to be easily integrated into existing health or risk prevention curricula
- Standardized script so it is easily replicated by any presenter

**Demonstrated Success:**

While we have done numerous interventions in a variety of school districts, our training program was formally implemented across all 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade Health classes in a Iron County, Utah in 2014 and has demonstrated ongoing success since that time to approximately 10,000 students. Pre and post training student survey data tracks and documents our success.

**How Our Approach Differs from Other Programs:**

- We *never* point to the neck because it unintentionally showing kids “how to play” (pass out challenges)
- We *never* explain how to play online challenges
- We *do not* recommend using material from other prevention programs without advance vetting by Erik’s Cause (to assure that potential trauma triggers are minimized)
- Additional brain science, risk resiliency, digital citizenship and/or anti-bullying skills may be added, provided they are approved by the school and have been vetted to minimize potential trauma

**Parent Presentation – Expanding their Parenting Toolkits:**

We also offer a wonderful parent evening which is also scripted and can be presented at any parent evening. We encourage parents to hear what their kids will learn from our “Navigating Social Media Challenges” program.

In addition to showing parents the student program, we also provide background and context, help them understand warning signs, and share specific parenting strategies to learn how to help their kids make healthier choices.

**Your kids are not immune. Some kids only tried a challenge only once or twice.**

**They didn’t know they were gambling with their lives.**

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