

NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES



A vital addition to your digital wellness curriculum

Help Kids Make Better Choices

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“NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES” a vital addition to your digital wellness curriculum Developed by Stephanie Small, LMFT and Judy Rogg, MSW

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STUDENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

“Navigating Social Media Challenges” Promotes Critical Thinking and Healthy Decision Making:

- Helps kids recognize/understand dangers
- Empowers kids to say “No” to risk activities
- Gives specific tools to resist peer pressure
- Offers strategies to avoid sticky situations
- Inspires kids to make better choices
- Offers new approaches to open dialogues between children and parents

The “Navigating Social Media Challenges” classroom program is intended complement and augment any existing digital wellness curricula.

Brief Rationale for this Topic:

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

By remaining faithful to our foundational principles, our program’s innovative solution helps students understand:

- the dangers of online challenges as well as all online harms;
- where they are in their brain development;
- how they receive and process information;
- why it is hard for them to think through all consequences without the help of a trusted adult; and
- empowers them to say “No” to peer pressure both online and in real life.

While pass out challenges are discussed as an “example” of a dangerous challenge, **our teaching objectives apply to all challenges, as well as all online harms in general. And the material is imparted in a way that does not make kids curious to want to try it.**

Primary Teaching Objectives:

Our program promotes critical thinking by:

- teaching the truth about social media apps (choosing what they see in their feeds);
- understanding how their brains work and where they are in their brain development;
- empowering kids to say NO to risk activities in general;
- encouraging kids to develop new approaches to resist peer pressure and avoiding sticky situations;
- inspiring kids to make better choices;
- offering new approaches to initiate dialogues with their parents;
- recognizing that the risks (both online and in real life) are real; and
- connecting the refusal skills and strategies learned in this program when dealing with all situations.

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The Actual Program:

Our program is fully scripted so it can be taught by any teacher, counselor comfortable with the material. It was originally created to be a single class. However, with requests to add-on additional harms, we have also created a two-class model which addresses topics including cyberbullying, online predators, sexting, and identity theft.

- It begins with is an interactive dialogue (using either a guided PowerPoint or via Google Slides). Knowledge is conveyed in a thoughtful progression that draws students into the conversation, gradually diffusing any barriers and allowing them to absorb the material. After the interactive discussion, there is a brief video that gently reinforces the basics taught during the discussion and concludes with memorial slides of some actual victims, helping students understand that this is real and could happen to them. (If using the two-session model, it reviews the material and adds in the additional topics.)
- Pre- and Post-Training Surveys: Brief pre- and post-training surveys (including Likert questions) help demonstrate the success of our program. All surveys are anonymous and student participation is voluntary. The answers are collected directly by Erik's Cause and collective general responses may be shared with the school district upon request.

Evidence-Based and Methodology:

Our program was developed on prevailing evidence-based best practices for prevention modules that currently address other risk topics. It is founded upon the principles of basic brain science as well as understanding the impact of trauma, and diminishing potential trauma while successfully imparting 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.).

Attributes of our Program that Meet School District Standards:

- Avoids the use of any traumatizing 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:

In 2023, Tennessee's Lenoir City schools and Richard Hardy Memorial School implemented our program with positive feedback and success. We have done countless interventions in school districts over the years, including Iron County, Utah, where it was taught from 2014 and thru 2022. The program has demonstrated ongoing success via voluntary and anonymous pre- and post-training surveys. (Collected survey results may be shared with the school district upon request.).

Parent Evening Workshop – “Is Social Media Destroying Health & Families?”:

We offer an informative parent evening which is scripted and can be presented at any parent evening. We encourage parents to hear what their kids will learn from “Navigating Social Media Challenges” in addition to learning some eye-opening data and useful parenting tips. We also provide parents with background and context, help them understand warning signs, and share specific parenting strategies to learn how to help their kids make healthier choices.

All Services are free of charge

Learn how we can help your community at www.erikscause.org