

NAVIGATING ONLINE HARMS™

A vital addition to your digital wellness curriculum

Help Kids Make Better Choices

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“NAVIGATING ONLINE HARMS™”

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 Online Harms” 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 Online Harms” program is intended complement and augment any existing digital wellness curricula.

Brief Rationale for this Topic:

Hundreds of studies exist which demonstrate the deteriorating health issues kids are experiencing because of the addictive nature of the online world, which entice kids to believe they are safe without any understanding of the dangers. Dozens of whistleblowers (former employees of the app companies) have also come forward and testified in Congressional hearings as well as in the media confirming the intentional lack of consideration for child safety regarding their products. We also now know that algorithms intentionally target our youth with a variety of harms, encouraging kids to “wash, rinse and repeat” without any care for their mental and/or physical health solely for the financial profit of the tech companies.

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

- the dangers of 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.

We’ve chosen to use pass out challenges as an “example” of a dangerous challenge because they are rarely – if ever – discussed in digital safety classes. However, **our teaching objectives apply to all online harms in general. And all our material is imparted in a way that does not make kids curious to want to try.**

Primary Teaching Objectives to Promote Critical Thinking by:

- teaching the truth about what apps they receive 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 or staff comfortable with the material. It was originally created to be a single class. However, the need has grown to address additional harms, so we have also created a two-class model which addresses topics including cyberbullying, online predators, sexting, why the apps do this 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, a brief video 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, review material and the additional topics are added in.)
- Voluntary/Anonymous Pre- and Post-Training Surveys: Brief pre- and post-training surveys (including Likert questions) help demonstrate the success of our program. 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 and 2025, Tennessee's Lenoir City schools, Richard Hardy Memorial School, and Spring Valley Middle 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 board-approved and taught from 2014 and thru 2022. The program has consistently demonstrated ongoing success via the pre- and post-training surveys).

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

We also 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 in addition to hearing some eye-opening data. We also help parents 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