Healthy Technology Use & Internet Safety

INTRODUCTION LESSON

We were all using our "tech devices," the internet, and social media A LOT *before* we were told to stay home from school.

And now that we're home, pretty much all day every day... we're going to be online even more. THAT'S A LOT OF SCREEN TIME.

The truth is, we're going to see the benefits of being online and connected in a ton of new ways over these next few weeks and maybe longer. But we also need to stay aware of the possible risks.

This lesson is about using technology safely, and in ways that enhance our lives and keep us connected and learning... and NOT in ways that put us at risk or add stress and negativity to our lives.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS:

- So far, what are some positives you've gotten out of your different devices and being connected through the internet?
- What changes have you seen "online" since the decision was made to close schools and keep people home?
- Do you have any suggestions for your classmates about helpful websites you've found?
- What risks are you aware of on the internet?
- Have you had any experiences online that have added stress or negativity to your life?
- Do you feel that being online so much is a good thing? A bad thing? In what ways?

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- Designate specific times during the day to use the internet, and specific times to UNPLUG and be away from your screens.
- Stay informed by reading news, but not TOO MUCH. Check your stress levels to know when to take a break.
- Use social media to stay connected to friends and loved ones. Share activities that are fun and helpful.

- Use the internet to help you with school, but also use the internet to discover new interests.
- Use your spare time and access to the internet to think about your future - to research colleges you might want to attend, careers you might love, and places you might want to travel. DAYDREAM AND GOOGLE STUFF about your daydreams.
- Avoid social media gossip… it will only add stress, and there's already plenty of stressful things happening.
- Don't be a cyberbully. Understand that EVERYONE is going through tough stuff these days. Don't try to distract yourself from your own stress by being mean to others.
- NEVER give out personal information (social security numbers, bank account numbers etc.) online without talking to an adult first. Your information can be used to hurt you or your family.
- SEE THE TEMPTATIONS… You may start to feel a little lonely or isolated. This is TOTALLY NORMAL. Resist the temptations to send personal or inappropriate pictures to try to "connect" or "flirt." These pictures can be (and often are) shared without you knowing.
- Remember that everything posted online IS PERMANENT and is never truly deleted.
- If you receive any strange, uncomfortable or threatening messages from anyone, tell an adult. DO NOT RESPOND. Simply save the message and talk to your family, tell a teacher, or email your counselor.

SEL LESSON SUMMARY

Right now, things are totally different and strange. Most of us are at home, all day.

While the internet allows us to stay connected to school and friends, to take breaks from our family members, and to feel a little bit "normal"… there are real risks to be aware of.

Keep reminding yourself that while you may feel alone at times… YOU'RE NOT. You're a phone call, facetime chat, text, or email away from connecting.

And most of all… keep reminding yourself that things will get back to normal and you'll be hanging out in parks and malls and theaters and school halls real soon… SO DON'T DO ANYTHING TOO FOOLISH on social media – you'll regret it when things return to normal.

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