

Social Media and How You Feel

How does your social media use affect how you feel?

50 mins.

Social media plays a big role in most teens' lives, and research shows that it causes intense feelings -- both positive and negative. But not all media use is the same. There are many benefits that come with both active and passive media use. For better social and emotional well-being, encourage students to become creators of digital media, not just consumers.

Standards:

ISTE - 1a, 1d, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a, 4b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d

Objectives:

- Reflect on how their social media use makes them feel and how it compares to other teenagers'.
- Describe how active and passive social media use can lead to positive and negative feelings.
- Identify action steps to increase their positive feelings when using social media.

Vocabulary: active use · passive use

Project the essay ["Stupid Blue Screen"](#) by Vanessa Ramon-Ibarra from the book [True Connections](#) (826 National and Common Sense Media, 2019). Have students take turns reading aloud. ([Slide 4](#))

Have students pair-share, discussing whether they agree or disagree with the experience of the author. Call on a few students to share their reactions.

Ask: *Now let's think specifically about social media -- things like Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, etc. How happy do you feel when using social media? Hold up a number between 1 and 5, with 5 being very happy and 1 being not at all happy.* ([Slide 5](#))

Note: Instead of raising numbers, you can have students answer the question via this [Google Form](#) or you can use a polling tool such as [Kahoot](#) or [Mentimeter](#).

Summarize the findings so that both you and students can get a sense of the differing sentiments related to social media use among the class members. Be sure to elicit the spectrum of positive and negative feelings associated with using social media. Commonly expressed feelings include:

- Positive: *connected, smart, in-the-know, inspired, entertained*
- Negative: *stressed, insecure, bummed, jealous, angry, tired*

Project the ["% of Teens Who Say the Following About Social Media"](#) infographic from Pew Research Center and ask: ([Slide 6](#))

- *What conclusions can you draw from these statistics?*
- *How do they compare to your personal experience?*

Invite students to respond. Emphasize that in these research findings, the positive feelings of connection and support outweigh the negative feelings of pressure and drama. Have students compare this data to the self-reflection ratings of the class.

Explore: **Different Perspectives** 20 mins.

Say: *We're going to continue reflecting on how social media can affect how we feel by watching a short video.*

Distribute the [Social Media Perspectives Student Handout](#) and read the directions in Part I aloud. Review each section of the notes tracker and explain to students that they should capture a minimum of three key takeaways and one comment in each of the additional sections. ([Slide 7](#))

Show the KQED *Above the Noise* video ["Is Social Media Making You Sick?"](#) ([Slide 8](#))

If students have devices and headphones, you can also have students watch the video independently.

Allow students a few minutes to capture notes in their handout and then invite them to share out. ([Slide 9](#)) Use the [Teacher Version](#) to help guide discussion. Questions to consider include:

- *What is the difference between active and passive social media use?*
- *Are all social media platforms the same? What makes Snapchat different from Instagram?*
- *Does social media cause depression?*

Highlight that, according to the video, it is difficult to conclude cause and effect (causation) when looking at social media use. It is really about the ways in which you use social media rather than whether you use it or how much that determines what influence it will have on your emotions.

Summarize the findings by saying that the effects of social media largely depend on how you use it. **Active use** involves *contributing online via posts, comments, or any other form of online communication and expression*. **Passive use** involves *just scrolling through online content without reacting to the content*. ([Slide 10](#))

Create: **Take Action** 15 mins.

Point students to Part 2 of the [Social Media Perspectives Student Handout](#) and say:
Remember, how we feel when using social media has a lot to do with what and how we're using it. Think about the different ways, both good and bad, that social media makes you feel as you complete Part 2 of your handout. Keep in mind that the same activity on the same platform can lead to different feelings for different people.

Allow students time to work independently on Part 2. If students are having a hard time coming up with concrete action steps for question four, provide some examples:

- *I'm going to put my phone on nighttime mode at night so I won't be tempted to look at social media, so I get more sleep and feel more refreshed the next day.*
- *I'm going to unfollow the people that make me jealous.*
- *I am going to spend more time communicating (commenting, posting, direct-messaging) with my friends on Instagram instead of endlessly scrolling through my feed.*

If students don't use social media, invite them to swap out "social media" for other digital media use such as gaming or watching shows.

Invite students to share out their reflections and action plans in groups or as a class.

Ask: *What could get in the way of you following through on your action plan? How could you hold yourself accountable for actually trying it?*

Invite students to share out.

Have students complete the [Lesson Quiz](#). Send home the [Family Activity](#) and [Family Tips](#).

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/social-media-and-how-you-feel>