

Module #3: Making Connections

Primary understanding

Students will explore and evaluate information about social connections in adolescence and how that affects the way adolescents use technology.

Module description

In this module, students will explore the ways adolescents socially connect, how technology has changed social connectedness, and the effects of social connectedness on the adolescent brain. Strategies for healthy technology use will be explored to enhance positive technology interactions.

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Module vocabulary

Connectedness - the state of being joined or linked

Social Connectedness - the feeling of being joined or linked to a particular person or group of persons

Synchronous - occurring at the same time

Asynchronous - occurring at different times

Nonverbal cues - ways of communicating that do not rely on words, such as facial expressions, gestures, body language, and tone of voice

Social cognition - the ability to make sense of the world through processing signals generated by others

Theory of Mind - thinking about other's thoughts and feelings

Normative - fits what is acceptable or normal

Deviant - differs from what is acceptable or normal; unacceptable

Deviancy training - the reinforcement of antisocial or deviant behaviors by one's peers

Module materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

Dry erase boards - 1 per group (if not available, copy paper)

Dry erase markers or pens - 1 per group

Dry erasers or paper towels - 1 per group

"What does it mean to be connected?" [Google Form](#) (educators should create their own distribution links)

Classroom chalk/whiteboard

[Online Deviancy Training Worksheet](#)

Module standards

[CDC National Health Standards for Middle School](#)

1.8.1 Analyze the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.

- 1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
- 2.8.3 Describe how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 2.8.5 Analyze how messages from the media influence health behaviors.
- 2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.
- 2.8.7 Explain how the perception of norms influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 2.8.9 Describe how some health risk behaviors can influence the likelihood of engaging in unhealthy behaviors.
- 5.8.1 Identify circumstances that can help or hinder healthy decision making.
- 6.8.2 Develop a goal to adopt, maintain, or improve a personal health practice.

Florida Health Education Standards for Middle School

- HE.6 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.1.8, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3, B.4.4, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.3, B.5.5, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1
- HE.7 C.1.1, C.1.2, C.1.4, C.1.8, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3, B.4.4, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.5, B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1, P.7.2
- HE.8 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.1.8, C.2.2, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.3, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.3, B.5.5, B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1

Lesson #1: Different ways of making connections

Essential question

How do different forms of social connection affect the ways in which we connect?

Learning intention

Explore how different ways of social connection affect how information is conveyed and received.

Lesson vocabulary

Connectedness - the state of being joined or linked

Social Connectedness - the feeling of being joined or linked to a particular person or group of persons

Synchronous - occurring at the same time

Asynchronous - occurring at different times

Nonverbal cues - ways of communicating that do not rely on words, such as facial expressions, gestures, body language, and tone of voice

Lesson materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

Dry erase boards - 1 per group (if not available, copy paper)

Dry erase markers or pens - 1 per group

Dry erasers or paper towels - 1 per group

Lesson standards

[CDC National Health Standards for Middle School](#)

1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.

2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.

[Florida Health Education Standards for Middle School](#)

HE.6 C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.6

HE.7 C.1.2

HE.8 C.1.2, C.2.6

Lesson plan

Introduction (~3 minutes)

Present the vocabulary words **connected** and **social connectedness** to students and ask them to share what makes them feel more social connectedness.

Face-to-face (~10 minutes)

Separate the class into pairs. Seat them so that they are facing each other and allow them to engage in conversation for 5 minutes.

Then, ask students to answer and discuss the questions on the slide.

- What mannerisms did your partner have?
- What did you notice about their facial expressions and/or body language?
- What could you tell about your partner from the inflection in their voices?

Back-to-back (~10 minutes)

Then, ask the students to turn their chairs around so that they are back to back with their partner. NO TALKING allowed.

Instruct students to engage in a written conversation with their partner by passing notes on the dry erase board/copy paper for 5 minutes. They are not allowed to turn around and look at their partner.

Ask students to answer and discuss the questions on the slide.

- What mannerisms did your partner have?
- What information was missing when you could not see their facial expressions and/or body language?
- What information was missing when you could not hear the inflection in their voices?

Share (~7 minutes)

After both communication activities, engage in a full class discussion.

- Which process of communicating did each group prefer and why?
- What were the benefits and challenges of each way of communicating?
- Which way of communicating held your attention? Why?
- Do you think it matters if we are connecting in person or online?

Vocabulary (~6 minutes)

Present the vocabulary words **synchronous** and **asynchronous**. Ask students which type of interactions in their activity were synchronous (face-to-face) and which were asynchronous (back-to-back). Ask them which best describes online interactions (asynchronous).

Present the vocabulary word **nonverbal cues**. Ask students what non-verbal cues were missing from their asynchronous (back-to-back) interactions, and what nonverbal cues may be missing from online interactions.

Turn and talk (~10 minutes)

Say: Synchronous and asynchronous are one way in which our offline and online interactions are different. Turn and talk to your neighbor to come up with some more differences.

Ask students to share when done.

Say: Here are some other ways in which offline and online ways of connecting are different. How do these differences change how we connect?

Facilitate student discussion.

Wrap up (~4 minutes)

Ask students to write down ways in which offline and online make them feel more social connectedness, and which way of connecting makes them feel more social connectedness.

If time, have students share their responses.

Lesson #2: Social connection in the adolescent brain

Essential question

How are social connections important to the adolescent brain?

Learning intention

Understand the need for adolescents to connect.

Lesson vocabulary

Connectedness - the state of being joined or linked

Social Connectedness - the feeling of being joined or linked to a particular person or group of persons

Social cognition - the ability to make sense of the world through processing signals generated by others

Theory of Mind - thinking about other's thoughts and feelings

Lesson materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

“What does it mean to be connected?” [Google Form](#) (educators should create their own distribution links)

Lesson standards

[CDC National Health Standards for Middle School](#)

- 1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
- 2.8.3 Describe how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.

[Florida Health Education Standards for Middle School](#)

HE.6 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.6

HE.7 C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.5

HE.8 C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.6

Lesson plan

Vocabulary (~2 minutes)

Review the vocabulary words **connectedness** and **social connectedness** from Lesson 1.

Engage (~15 minutes)

Ask the students to answer the questions on the “What does it mean to be connected?” [Google Form](#) (educators should create their own distribution links). Review responses and narrow the conversation to three questions.

1. What does it mean to be connected with your peers?
2. How has staying connected with your peers changed as you have grown into adolescence?
3. How has social media changed the way we connect?

Note: If students do not have their own devices to complete the Google Form, educators can put the questions on a slide to prompt discussion.

Watch (~3 minutes)

Say: *What is happening in the brain that makes us want to make connections?*

Watch UNC adolescent social development video clip (part 1)

Vocabulary (~10 minutes)

Review vocabulary word **social cognition** from the video. Ask students to come up with examples of social cognition.

Potential answers: learning what others think of you; learning how to behave from watching other people

Review vocabulary word **theory of mind** from the video. Ask students for examples of when they have engaged in theory of mind.

Potential answers: wondering what someone else thinks about your outfit; deciding what gift they think a friend would like.

Watch & discuss (~8 minutes)

Watch UNC adolescent social development video clip (part 2).

Have students discuss the disadvantages to heightened social cognition

Answers may include: Feeling super self-conscious about themselves; changing what they do based on what others think; trying to please others too much

Watch & discuss (~15 minutes)

Watch UNC adolescent social development video clip (part 3).

Ask students to discuss why they think adolescents are more embarrassed when watched, and how this could affect their behavior.

Exit slip (~2 minutes)

Have students write down something they learned and how that changes how they think about their social connections.

Lesson #3: Connecting over social media

Essential question

How can social media create positive and negative connections?

Learning intention

Understand the role of social media and how it affects you and those around you.

Lesson vocabulary

Connectedness - the state of being joined or linked

Social Connectedness - the feeling of being joined or linked to a particular person or group of persons

Lesson materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

Lesson standards

[CDC National Health Standards for Middle School](#)

- 1.8.1 Analyze the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.
- 1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
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- 2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.

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- HE.7 C.1.1, C.1.2, C.1.4, C.1.8, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.8, C.2.9
- HE.8 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.1.8, C.2.2, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9

Lesson plan

Vocabulary (~1 minute)

Review the vocabulary words **connectedness** and **social connectedness** from Lesson 1.

Engage (~3 minutes)

Say: *Do you think that connection is a fundamental need such as food, water and shelter?*

Ask students to raise their hands to vote yes, raise their hands to vote no, and raise their hands to vote that they're not sure. Ask students to share the reasoning behind their votes.

Discuss (~5 minutes)

Tell students about the positive associations with social connectedness

Say: *Why do you think social connectedness is beneficial for youth?*

Discuss (~6 minutes)

Ask students to write down their best guesses about what proportion of U.S. adolescents are connecting online, and how often adolescents are connecting online.

Then, show them the charts of what U.S. teens report.

Say: *In a 2018 survey, just 3% of U.S. teens reported not using any of these social media sites. That means 97% percent of U.S. teens use some form of social media. Does that surprise you or fit your guess? Why or why not?*

Say: *That same report found that most U.S. teens - 89% - used their phones several times a day or almost constantly. Does that surprise you or fit your guess? Why or why not?*

Engage (~10 minutes)

Say: *Research shows that U.S. teens are spending a great deal of time online, and nearly all of them are using social media to connect. Do you think that has most positive effects, mostly negative effects, or somewhere in between?*

Ask students to vote by moving around the classroom. Designate one side as mostly positive, one side as mostly negative, and the middle as neutral. Ask kids to stand between the two sides based on their opinion.

Show students the chart with what U.S. teens report.

Say: *Here's what the teens in the survey said about the effects of social media on people their age.*

Note whether this fit how students voted.

Invite students to discuss the reasoning behind their votes. If students are still in line to show their votes, they can turn and talk to their neighbors before a class-wide discussion.

Brainstorm & discuss (~15 minutes)

Ask students to make lists of positive and negative effects of connecting over social media.

Read through the examples of positive and negative effects on the slide and ask students to share their own examples.

Activity (~6 minutes)

Show students the social media seesaw.

Say: We can think of social media like a seesaw. There are lots of ways and reasons to use social media, as shown by the rows in the image: To have social interactions, for self-expression, exploration, social browsing, and general content browsing. Each of these ways can have positive effects and negative effects.

For example, today we discussed how using social media for social interactions can have positive and negative effects. Positive effects include feeling more connected to friends, and negative effects include feeling more disconnected and more isolated.

Instruct students to pick one of the other reasons to use social media (one of the rows) and, using their own experiences, write down a time when they felt one of the positive effects and one of the negative effects of that reason. If time, have students share their examples.

Wrap up (~4 minutes)

Ask students to create IF, THEN, BECAUSE statements about social media interactions.

If time, ask a few students to share their statements after they are done.

Lesson #4: Connecting, offline and online

Essential question

How can the desire to connect online interrupt our in-person interactions?

Learning intention

Explore how online interactions may intrude on in-person connections.

Lesson vocabulary

None this lesson

Lesson materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

Classroom chalk/whiteboard

Lesson standards

CDC National Health Standards for Middle School

- 1.8.1 Analyze the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.
- 1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
- 2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.
- 6.8.2 Develop a goal to adopt, maintain, or improve a personal health practice.

Florida Health Education Standards for Middle School

- HE.6 C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.6.2, B.6.3
- HE.7 C.1.1, C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3
- HE.8 C.1.2, C.2.2, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3

Lesson plan

Introduction (~3 minutes)

Draw a line on the board. Label one end “Never” and the other end “Always”. Ask students to come to the board and mark where they fall on the line for how often phones interrupt their in-person interactions.

After students have returned to their seats, say: *Why is it so easy for phones and social media to interrupt things? Because our phone notifications are designed to grab our attention, and we’ve learned to associate the notifications with the potential for a rewarding social interaction.*

Review (~1 minute)

If Module 2 Lesson 4 (social media and conditioning) was taught:

Say: *Remember when we learned about conditioning, like how the music of an ice cream truck makes your mouth water?*

If Module 2 Lesson 4 (social media and conditioning) was not taught:

Say: Have you ever felt your mouth water when you hear the music of an ice cream truck, or automatically packed up your supplies to leave the classroom when you heard the bell? You may not realize it, but you have done those things, you have experienced conditioning. You have learned to associate the sound of the ice cream truck or the classroom bell with a specific response.

Discuss (~16 minutes)

Say: Conditioning can occur with your phone notifications as well, like when you've been conditioned to learn that a phone notification sound, buzz, or image makes you check your phone for a social reward.

What do you feel when you see unread notifications? Does it bother you to leave them unchecked?

Facilitate student discussion.

Say: If you are with someone else, do you check your notifications immediately? Why or why not?

Facilitate student discussion.

Say: If someone else checks their notifications when they're with you, how does that make you feel?

Facilitate student discussion.

Ask students to discuss with their neighbors whether conditioning makes them feel more or less connected during their online and offline interactions. Then share out as a class.

Watch & discuss (~10 minutes)

Play the first part of spoken word video "Look Up". (Note: The whole video is great, but it does include one swear word, which is not included in the portion played in the slides.)

Ask: What does the poem's author mean by the statement on the slide? Can you identify with this?

Play the end of spoken word video "Look Up".

Ask: What does the poem's author mean by the statement on the slide? Can you identify with this?

Engage (~10 minutes)

Ask students to discuss, first with their neighbors and then as a class, how connecting with peers has changed with technology and how that affects how they connect in person.

Data discussion (~8 minutes)

Say: *There is good news here! Research shows that the amount of time teens spend online does not affect how much time they spend with their friends in person.*

Teens who say they are online almost constantly (left blue bar) are just as likely to see their friends daily in person and outside of school as those teens who say they are online less often (left gold bar).

Furthermore, teens who are online almost constantly get together with their friends online, outside of school, slightly more than those teens who are online less often (right pair of bars). This means teens who are online a lot actually have more contact with their friends because of these extra online interactions.

Ask students if this fits their expectations and/or their experiences. Facilitate student discussion

Wrap up (~2 minutes)

Ask students to write down 2 ideas to help them resist the urge to check their phones.

Lesson #5: Peer influence

Essential question

How are adolescents influenced by peers when connecting through social media?

Learning intention

Understand how peers can influence decision making, both offline and online.

Lesson vocabulary

Normative - fits what is acceptable or normal

Deviant - differs from what is acceptable or normal; unacceptable

Deviancy training - the reinforcement of antisocial or deviant behaviors by one's peers

Lesson materials

[Lesson Slides](#)

[Online Deviancy Training Worksheet](#)

Lesson standards

[CDC National Health Standards for Middle School](#)

- 1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
- 2.8.3 Describe how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 2.8.5 Analyze how messages from the media influence health behaviors.
- 2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.
- 2.8.7 Explain how the perception of norms influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 2.8.9 Describe how some health risk behaviors can influence the likelihood of engaging in unhealthy behaviors.
- 5.8.1 Identify circumstances that can help or hinder healthy decision making.

[Florida Health Education Standards for Middle School](#)

- HE.6 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3, B.4.4, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.3, B.5.5, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1
- HE.7 C.1.1, C.1.2, C.1.4, C.2.2, C.2.5, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3, B.4.4, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.5, B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1, P.7.2
- HE.8 C.1.2, C.1.4, C.2.2, C.2.6, C.2.8, C.2.9
B.4.1, B.4.3, B.5.1, B.5.2, B.5.3, B.5.5, B.6.1, B.6.2, B.6.3
P.7.1

Lesson plan

Introduction (~6 minutes)

Ask with a show of hands who would “Like” the photo on the slide if they saw it on Instagram. Encourage students to explain why or why not and see if they are able to pinpoint the risk behavior.

Ask: What is the perception that the poster is trying to convey? Do you feel they were successful in conveying their message? How likely would you participate in the same behavior after viewing this?

Ask with a show of hands who would “Like” the next photo on the slide if they saw it on Instagram. Encourage students to explain why or why not and see if they are able to pinpoint the risk behavior.

Ask: What is the perception that the poster is trying to convey? Do you feel they were successful in conveying their message? How likely would you participate in the same behavior after viewing this?

Watch & discuss (~13 minutes)

Say: Researchers have found that adolescents, like yourself, are especially susceptible to being influenced by their peers.

Watch Nature video about adolescent risk-takers

Say: The video noted that adolescents can be influenced by their peers to take more risks. Researchers have found that adolescents and their friends become more like each other as they spend more time with each other, across a variety of different measures. This suggests that peers influence each other in many ways.

Review the ways listed on the slides.

Say: It's important to note that this can mean friends influence each other to engage in more risky behavior OR to engage in less risky behaviors and more positive behaviors.

Ask students why they are influenced by their peers, and how peer responses would affect their actions.

Vocabulary (~ 1 minute)

Present the vocabulary words **normative** and **deviant**

Peer influence (~9 minutes)

Step through how positive peer influence works. Ask students what they think the teen will do for the last box. Note that the peer will probably continue or increase their normative behavior.

Ask students to give examples of ways to discourage deviant behavior and ways to encourage normative behavior.

Answers may include: saying how they feel, using facial expressions of disapproval or approval

Step through how negative peer influence works. Ask students what they think the teen will do for the last box. Note that the peer will probably continue or further escalate their deviant behavior.

Ask students to give examples of ways that deviant behavior is encouraged by peers.

Answers may include: saying encouraging or approving things, positive facial expressions, laughing

Vocabulary (~1 minute)

Present the vocabulary word **deviancy training**

Activity (~ 7 minutes)

Instruct students to complete the [Online Deviancy Training Worksheet](#) with their own example of how deviancy training could occur online.

Ask students to share their examples. Be sure to note that social media “Likes” is a way of signaling approval for normative and deviant behavior.

The Like button influence (~12 minutes)

Say: Social media gives us lots of ways to signal our approval of someone through the Like or Favorite button. Let's talk about how this affects your brain.

Say: Scientists have found that your brain likes “Likes”.

Say: When you see a cute or funny image on social media, it's probably easy to decide that you Like it enough to click the Like button.

Say: But what if the photo wasn't immediately appealing to you? Raise your hand if you would click the Like button for this photo.

What if I told you that this photo has over 55 million Likes? Raise your hand if you would click the Like button for this photo with that information.

In a research study, scientists discovered that when adolescents saw Instagram photos with lots of Likes, the reward-processing regions of their brain were more active compared to when they saw Instagram photos with few Likes. They were also more likely to click the “Like” button when a photo already had a lot of Likes.

Does this fit your experience using social media?

Say: If your peers' Likes can influence you to Like something more, what do you think that means when you see a deviant social media post with lots of Likes?

Facilitate student discussion. Encourage students to discuss ways to resist liking deviant posts, or to recognize when a post is deviant.

Remind students that they, as peers, can also have a positive influence on each others' behavior.

Exit slip (~ 1 minute)

Ask students to write down one thing they can do in the next week to encourage normative behavior in their peers.