HALF GIRL, HALF FACE

A WORKSHOP ABOUT ONLINE IMAGE
FOR GIRLS IN GRADES 7-9

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
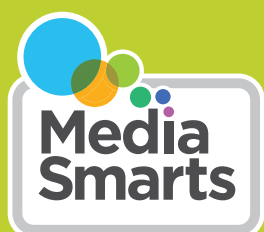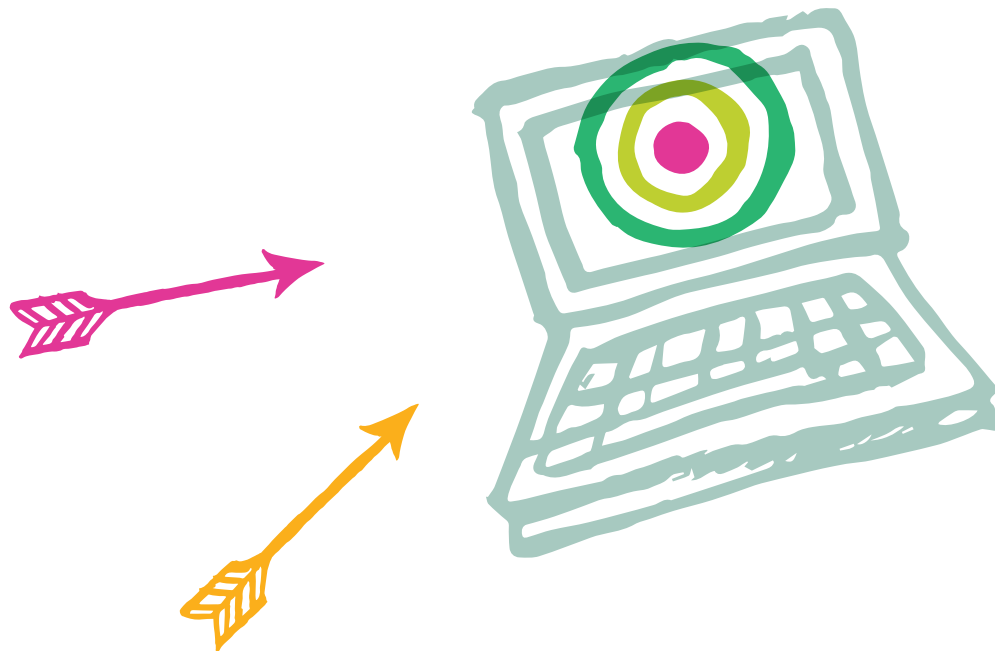
Media
Smarts

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> ## "BASICALLY, WITH A PICTURE YOU CAN DESTROY SOMEONE'S LIFE."[1]

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to provide support to teachers, youth and community leaders when facilitating the *Half Girl, Half Face* workshop for girls.

The workshop looks at many of the issues teenage girls in grades 7-9 may encounter when they use digital media – particularly social networks. According to MediaSmarts' 2014 *Young Canadians in a Wired World* study, reading and posting on social networks are favourite online activities for most Canadian youth: 82 percent of students in grades 7-11 have Facebook accounts and just under half have Twitter and Instagram accounts. This is especially true for girls, who are more likely than boys to use social media to communicate with family and friends.

All of this online socializing brings with it a wide range of opportunities and challenges. This workshop is designed to give girls a chance to discuss and reflect on their online experiences and those of their peers and to think about ways they can ensure that their online interactions are positive for them and others.

The video *Half Girl, Half Face* is based on a fringe festival play by the same name that was written by Zoë Erwin-Longstaff. In the video a teenage girl discovers that a very ordinary image of her face, cropped from a photo that was posted online of her and a friend at a party, has gone viral and become a "meme." As her image is appropriated by people she knows and doesn't know, she shares her anger, frustration and confusion through an online video in which she tries to explain to friends and haters alike how this experience has affected her.

Along the way, she questions many aspects of social networking that are relevant to teens: the tension between privacy and publicity; social rules and expectations about how you should – and should not – represent yourself and how others represent you; and social media as an extension and affirmation of inclusion and popularity.

A word of caution: In order to maintain authenticity, some rude gestures and language are used by the video's protagonist. We recommend that facilitators preview *Half Girl, Half Face* to ensure its appropriateness for their students or workshop participants.

Half Girl, Half Face *was inspired by young women, who lit up my Facebook newsfeed once they hit a certain age, as they began to construct online personas that were not only exuberant and brash, but also sentimental, saccharine— and, notably, sexualized. This transformation came out in status updates, pix, captions, quotes, cover photos and wall posts—everywhere. Their online activity was at once embarrassingly transparent and bravely earnest. It was a public performance and experiment with identity.*

Soon I began to watch dedicated YouTube channels, where young women found expression in short videos that were revealing, clunky, disturbing and oddly empowering all at once. Though what was said was often troubling, these video diaries seemed to provide a new generation of young women with a platform for self-expression.

Zoe Erwin-Longstaff
Author, *Half Girl, Half Face*

> **"YOU DON'T SEE THE ACTUAL HURT HAPPENING ONLINE, BUT YOU'LL SEE THE EFFECT OF IT AFTERWARDS."**
>
> 14-year-old girl, Ottawa

As shown in the video, photos posted online can be quite stressful for girls and young women, many of whom live in a state of hypervigilance as they attempt to manage their online reputations and identities. *Young Canadians in a Wired World* paints a picture of youth who are very proactive when it comes to controlling who can view their images, including using privacy settings to block certain people from seeing them, deleting photos they've posted or asking others to take photos down. There are also clear social expectations about how photos should be handled, with almost all of the students who were surveyed expecting their friends to ask before posting a photo that might reflect badly on them and more than half expecting friends to ask before posting *any* photo of them online.[2]

Like the main character of the video, roughly a quarter of Canadian students say that someone has been mean or cruel to them online. Contrary to the "mean girl" stereotype, boys are actually more likely than girls to behave this way, although girls are more likely to be the targets of mean or cruel behaviour and are more likely than boys to report this being a serious problem for them. However, it's important to be aware that being mean online is **not** common behaviour for Canadian kids and teens.

The *Half Girl, Half Face* workshop gives girls an opportunity to discuss issues such as these in a safe and inclusive space and to reflect on their own experiences living life online.

2   Steeves, Valerie. *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Online Privacy, Online Publicity*. MediaSmarts, 2014

FOR FACILITATORS

SETTING UP A WORKSHOP IN YOUR CLASSROOM OR COMMUNITY

Because the *Half Girl, Half* Face video is primarily about youth culture and young people's experiences, it is recommended that *peer-led* discussions be part of this workshop. However, this doesn't mean that adults don't have a key role to play as facilitators: teens may be the *subject* experts when it comes to social networking and youth, but adults have an important role to play as *learning* experts who help them find ways to reflect on the issues raised in the video.

The structure of the workshop is:

1. Group warm up activity (Peer leaders in groups) (10 minutes)
2. Introduction to and viewing of the video (whole group – Facilitator-led) (20 minutes)
3. Group follow up activity (Peer leaders in groups) (30 minutes)
4. Wrap up whole-group discussion (Facilitator) (10 - 15 minutes)
5. Optional extension activities, if desired
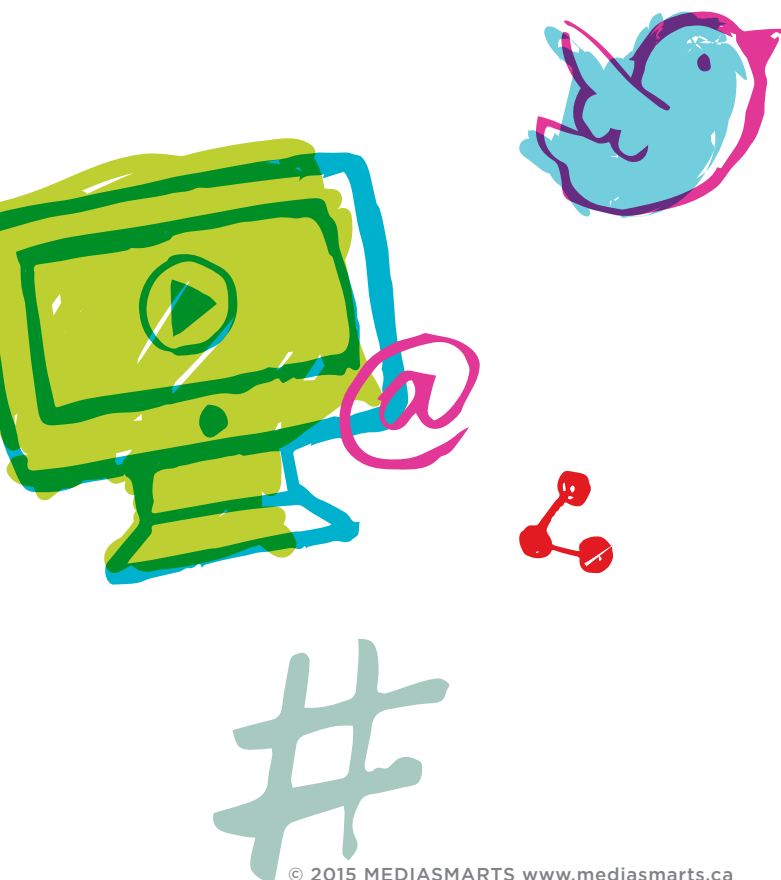
BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

1. *Select peer leaders.* You will want roughly one peer leader for every five youth. Peer leaders may be older youth or those of similar ages who have demonstrated a capacity for leadership.

2. *Pre-select the discussion groups.* Once you've decided on your peer leaders, pre-select their groups. It's important to pay attention to group members' personalities and reading levels when doing this. Don't assume that weaker readers won't have any trouble because it's a video: youth who have difficulty reading often also have trouble with inferences and decoding texts beyond the surface meaning. You should also make sure that no single group has too many talkative youth as they will be likely to dominate discussion in that group.

3. *Meet with the peer leaders ahead of time.* Ideally, have the peer leaders view the video with you before the workshop so that you can talk about it with them. Give each of them a copy of the *Peer Leader Guide* (p. 12). (Be sure to read through the guide yourself ahead of time.)

4. *Prepare the peer leaders for the workshop.* Prime your peer leaders by taking them through the activities in the *Peer Leader Guide* and the exercises that they will be doing with their groups:

   • Warm up activity (Identity iceberg)
   • Follow up activity (discussion)

Explain the discussion procedure to them and model the process you hope to see by listening to them and encouraging them to share their own reactions and experiences. Respect their position as subject experts.

Although these discussions are intended to be general, there's always a chance that someone may become uncomfortable about what is being discussed or disclose something personal that raises concerns about their safety or well-being. Should this happen, instruct peer leaders to come to you instead of attempting to deal with these issues themselves.

DURING THE WORKSHOP

5. *Create a supportive environment.* In your opening remarks, remind everyone that the goal of this workshop is to create a safe place where people can talk about social networking in a friendly and respectful way; but if anything makes them feel uncomfortable -- or they want to talk to someone after the workshop about anything that bothers them -- they can come to you or another adult that they trust or they can contact Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or http://kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/AskUsOnline.aspx. (If possible, have this number and web address posted in a prominent place.)

6. *Keep everyone on task.* While the group activities are taking place, support the peer leaders by circulating among the groups and providing positive reinforcement when groups are on task and talking about the video. Encourage synthesis and reflection.

7. *Wrap up the discussion and help students reflect on what they've learned:*

   • Once the follow up activity is completed, bring the groups back together and have the students discuss what they think are the most important issues raised by the video. (The peer leader from each group will summarize their discussion.)

     Did the different groups identify similar issues or were there significant differences? What might explain the differences (access to technology, different experiences, different ages in the groups, etc.)?

   • Ask students to think about the various ways that people in their group responded to the video. Did that make them think any differently about what happened in the video?

   • Pick the issues that were identified as being most important and have students brainstorm effective ways of dealing with them. If you like, you can have them act these out as scenarios or create stories, films or comics in response to this question: If one of these things happened to you or a friend, how would you deal with it?
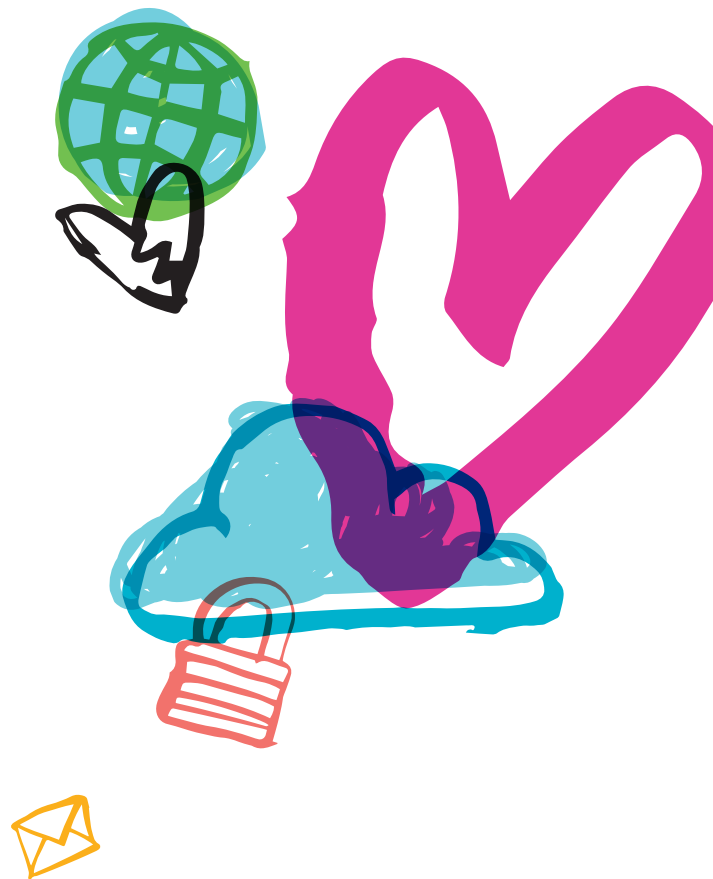
   • Once everyone has agreed on effective strategies, have participants create a series of posters for your school or community centre.

The following online tip sheets have been created by MediaSmarts to help young people better manage their online presence and think about what they share online. If you are distributing any of these as part of your workshop, we strongly recommended that time be set aside at the workshop for you to review the key points with participants.

Building Your Online Brand: Establishing a Positive Presence Online
http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/tipsheet/TipSheet_BuildingYourBrand_0.pdf

Think Before You Share
http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/tipsheet/TipSheet_Think_Before_You_Share.pdf

Do the Right Thing
http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/tipsheet/tipsheet_dotherightthing.pdf

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Time permitting, the following extension activities can be added.

ACTIVITY 1: THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN
(Led by facilitator)

Introduction:

"When you were brainstorming your Identity Icebergs in your groups [p. 14], you looked at parts of yourself that can be easily seen by other people -- and other parts of yourself that are less easily seen -- and some of the challenges this can raise in how people see you. You also talked about the different people that we share various parts of ourselves with."

Ask:

- How many of you have social networking accounts?

- Does your social networking account permit others to 'like' or post comments?

- Thinking of yourself and your friends, how important is it for people to 'like' or comment on your posts?

On a blackboard or flipchart, post or draw a 'thumbs up' icon and ask students to brainstorm positive things about their online posts being 'liked'. Write their suggestions in and around the diagram.

Next post a 'thumbs down' image.

Ask students to brainstorm the ways that pressure to be 'liked' might limit or constrain how we represent ourselves online. Put their suggestions on and around this diagram as you did with the thumbs up icon.

Finally, ask students to consider: What types of things generally fit into being 'liked' and praised online? What things are more difficult to represent/ or cannot be represented in images and statements that are posted online?

ACTIVITY 2: EXPERIENCES ONLINE
(Can be led by facilitator or peer leader)

This activity can be done as a written assignment or journal entry, or as an additional group discussion.

Group Discussion:

If done as a group discussion, have peer leaders share some or all of the quotes in the *Experiences Online* handout (pp.10-11) with members of their groups and then, based on the leading questions in the handout, have groups report back on the quotes that were most relevant to them, and why.

Written Assignment:

If done as a written assignment or journal entry, have participants read through the quotes in the *Experiences Online* handout, pick one that they feel is true and reflects their experience in some way and then write a journal entry or short piece that responds to the leading questions.

For more information and resources visit
mediasmarts.ca

ABOUT THE PLAY

ZOË ERWIN-LONGSTAFF – AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR

Zoë is a director and playwright from Toronto. She received her Honours degree in Theatre from McGill University and her MA in Performance Studies from York University. Her work has appeared in SummerWorks, the Toronto Fringe Festival, the Atlantic Fringe Festival, Alumnae Theatre's New Ideas Festival and the Lab Cab Performance Festival. She is part of Factory Theatre's Young Playwrights Unit, The Foundry. www.zoeerwinlongstaff.com

ARLEN AGUAYO STEWART -- ACTOR

Arlen was born and raised in Montreal where she started acting professionally at eleven years old. Favorite credits include: Oren Safdie's critically acclaimed new play "Unseamly" at Infinitheatre and Jennifer Kierans' "Soother" which won international recognition in the Uppsala Short Film Festival. She studied theatre and psychology at McGill University, Meisner technique with Jacqueline McClintock and Shakespearean text at Stella Adler. Beyond acting, Arlen also makes time for her other artistic passions: music, painting and dance.

Production History:

- Atlantic Fringe Festival, Halifax, August 29-September 3, 2013
- eGirls, eCitizens Conference, Carleton University, Ottawa, March 28, 2014
- Canadian Women's Foundation Girls Conference, Toronto, April 25, 2014
- Girls of the Hood Conference, Montreal, May 17, 2014
- Lab Cab Performance Festival, Toronto, July 26-27, 2014
- SummerWorks Performance Festival, Toronto, August 7-17, 2014

Honours:

At SummerWorks, Half Girl/Half Face received honorable mention for the ContraGuys Award for Best New Performance Text.

THE *HALF GIRL, HALF FACE* VIDEO WAS CREATED BY FILMMAKER JOSH LYON

Josh is a filmmaker based in Kingston, Ontario. He has directed, shot and edited over a hundred short films & micro-documentaries. His work has been featured on CBC's ZeD and has been screened at film festivals in Kingston, Toronto, and Adelaide, Australia. Josh currently teaches in the Music & Digital Media program at St. Lawrence College.

HALF GIRL, HALF FACE ACTIVITY

EXPERIENCES ONLINE HANDOUT

These statements are from girls who were interviewed about social networking and from the *Half Girl, Half Face* video.

Read through them and pick one that you feel is accurate and that you can relate to.

In your reflection, think about:

a) Why do you feel the quote is accurate?

b) Can you make connections with this statement from your personal experience or observations?

c) What might someone say if they disagreed with the statement or thought it wasn't accurate?
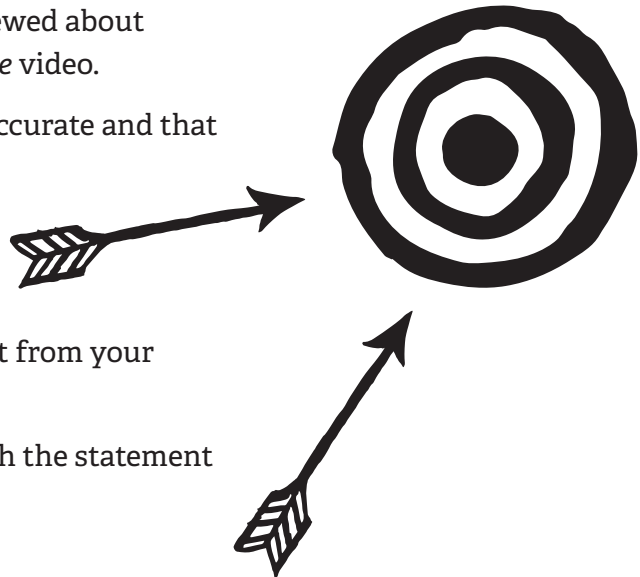
Sometimes it's really embarrassing, if you're making, like, the stupidest face in a picture and your friend posts it on Facebook, that's gonna start some drama if they won't take it down or people have already seen it.
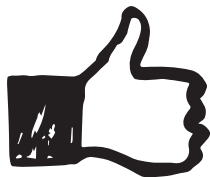
Girls kind of feel pressured to be on lot of social media sites and post pictures of themselves, and then if they're getting a lot of guy followers they'll feel pressures to like cater their pictures or the style of their picture more towards the guy followers.

When I choose a picture, I want to make sure I look good in it. Sometimes I'll put a picture of just myself, whether I cut my hair or did something different. I put on make-up one day and I thought it was nice. And other times, I'll feel like there's too many pictures of myself on Facebook. I'm going to put something where I'm doing something with someone else.

I think when girls post something, they'll say something mean, but it's supposed to be a joke, but the other person takes it mean, and then they get offended, they get into a fight. And if a guy posts some sarcastic comment, they just kind of laugh it off.

There's some people that have different personalities online. They create accounts and they're just on YouTube and they become this character which is not them, and it gives them the chance to become somebody else, someone they wish they could be.

It's not fair how bad your reputation can get affected by one bad decision. It's not fair how easily your whole entire image can get changed based on one picture.

Kids try to seem better online and happier, and just post everything like that. Some kids try to make them look like everyone's their friend that their boyfriend's the greatest, but in reality, they're not.

You look at the picture and you're like "Why won't people like this?" and then you look at it and you think "Yeah, my hair doesn't look that good," or "My clothes don't look that good," or "Wow, that outfit actually wasn't that nice." You start to look at everything and then you make yourself feel more negative about it.

And now that everyone's liking and re-tweeting and sharing me, it's like the me I see in the meme is the me I want to be. I'm kind of jealous of my own self.

I'm making it seem like more of a thing than it is, but you know, like, yeah, if a pic isn't taken at a party, what's the point? Did the party even happen? Does it count? I'm totally joking, but actually...

Yeah, yeah, it's real mature to make fun of someone you don't really know for a reason you don't even really get yourself.

I like the pic, but it's not really up to me.

PEER LEADER GUIDE

Hi there. Thanks for being a peer leader! This guide will take you through everything you need to know for the *Half-Girl, Half-Face* workshop. If you have any questions, be sure to talk them over with your adult workshop facilitator. Are you ready? Let's get started.

YOU'RE IN CHARGE!

As a peer leader, you're going to lead your group to talk about the *Half Girl, Half Face* video. You'll help members connect the video to their own lives and experiences by working with them to pick and talk about the parts of the video that are most meaningful to them.

Your job is also to help keep the conversation on track and make sure that everyone is listening and responding to each other's ideas.

These discussions are supposed to be general, friendly and respectful. But just in case the conversation makes anyone uncomfortable, remind everyone that they can stop participating at any time and can talk to the facilitator, Kids Help Phone or an adult they trust if they need advice.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

The first thing you want to do is to meet with your adult facilitator and the other peer leaders to watch the video. The facilitator will talk to you about how things will go at the workshop and help you decide which issues from the video you might want to talk about with your group.

AT THE WORKSHOP

Before Watching the Video
Warm up activity

Before your group watches the video, take them through the following warm-up exercise, which should take about 10 minutes:

Using the iceberg handout (pg. 14), or drawing a similar one onto a flip chart or black board, work with your group to brainstorm an 'identity iceberg'.

Start by asking: "What is special about icebergs?" (The answer you are looking for is that we only see the 'tip' of the iceberg – most of it is below the water.)

Next ask them how people can sometimes be like icebergs. (We are like icebergs because people judge us based on how we look and act on the outside -- but this is just a small part of who we are. Looks can sometimes be deceiving because there are so many other things about us below the surface that can't be seen at a glance.) To see how this works, have members of your group suggest characteristics that form our public identity (tip of the iceberg) and our private identity (what's below the surface of the water). Write their answers onto the chart.

Suggestions of things that people see:

• age
• gender
• language
• race or ethnicity
• physical characteristics
• how we act or behave
• our sense of style/fashion

Suggestions of things that people might not be able to see:

• our beliefs and values
• our emotions and feelings
• our dreams and fears
• our attitudes
• how we see the world
• our likes and dislikes
• our wants and needs
• our creativity and our talents

Once everyone's suggestions have been put onto the diagram, ask the question: why is it important to try to understand things we don't see in other people as well as things we do see? (Because it's usually the things we don't see that affect how we act. Sometimes we need to look below the surface before judging someone.)

Next, ask members of your group to think about audiences – who are we likely to share each of these characteristics with? Most of the things at the tip of the iceberg would be shared with everyone who sees us – although we generally change how we act depending on who we're with; for example, how we behave in front of our parents compared to how we behave when we're with our friends.

Looking at the characteristics that are below the surface, have members of your group brainstorm the people who we might share some of these parts of ourselves with.

Finally, ask members of your group to think about a picture that someone has posted of themselves on a social networking page. How might this photo be similar to our iceberg model? (Like the tip of the iceberg, a photo shows only a part of who we are.)

Ask them – how might this be a problem? (Unfortunately, people make judgements based on the things they see without understanding the whole person.)

IDENTITY
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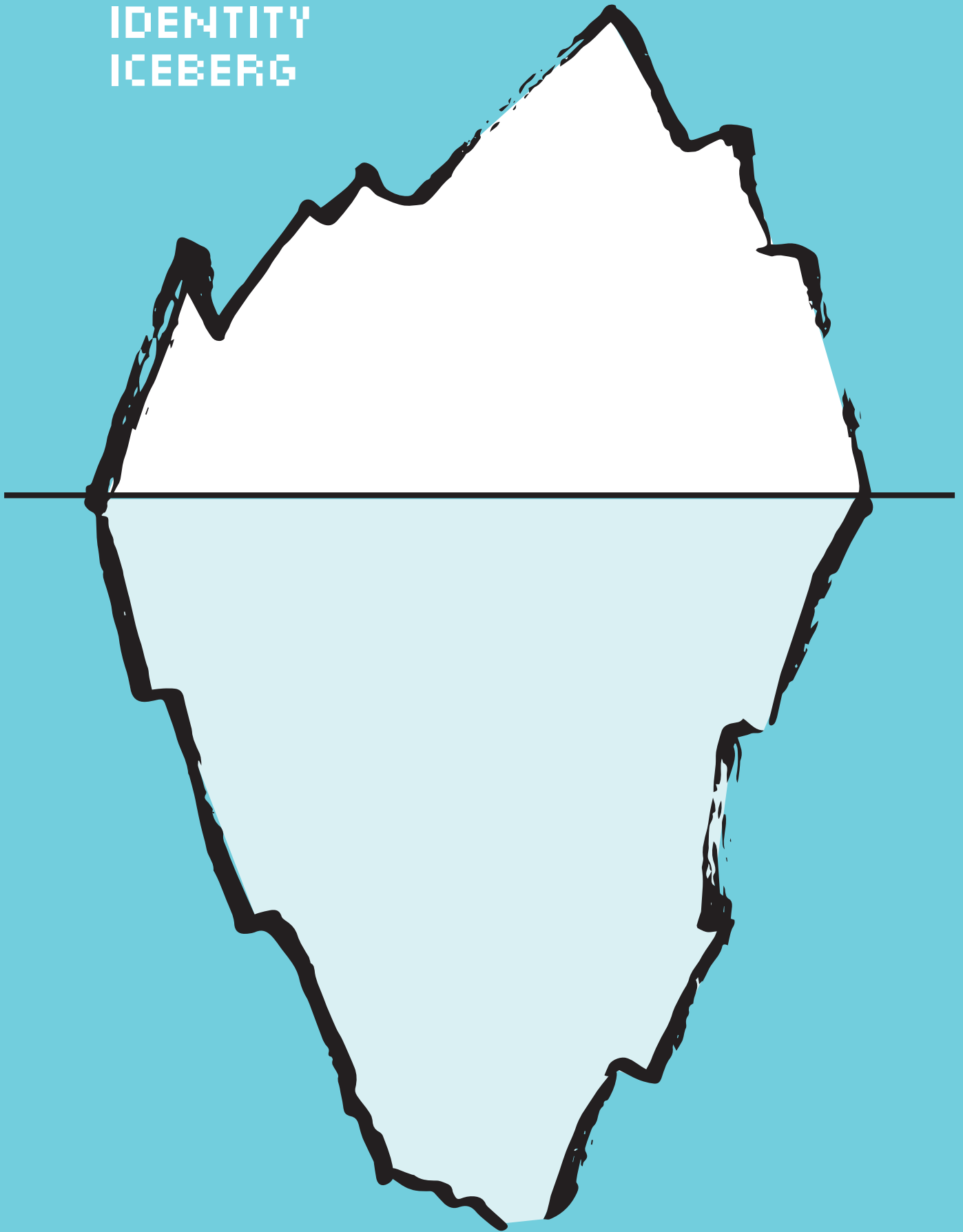
After Watching the Video
Follow up activity

This next group activity takes about 30 minutes.

After everyone has watched the video, go back to your group to create a short summary of what happened to the main character. (Make sure someone takes notes of key points.) Once everyone agrees on the summary, give everyone five minutes to write a journal entry responding to these questions:

Write about something **positive** or **negative** about social networking (or being online in general) that the video made you think of. How did that come up in the video? Has it ever affected you or anyone you know?

When your group has finished their journal entries, ask each person to share what they wrote with a partner. Give the partners a few minutes to compare and talk about what they wrote.

Lead your group in talking about good and bad online experiences based on their responses to the video. Start by asking them to share what they talked about with their partners.

Make sure that everyone in the group gets a chance to say something and that no one person takes up too much of the group's time. Don't agree or disagree with what they say, but help them push their thinking with questions like:

• How do you know?

• Why you feel that way?

• How might someone different from you see this differently?

Let your group decide what issues in the video to talk about. If they get stuck, questions like these might help:

• Who "owns" a picture – the person who took it, the person in it, or both?

• When something goes wrong online, is it better to get help or to try to deal with it on your own?
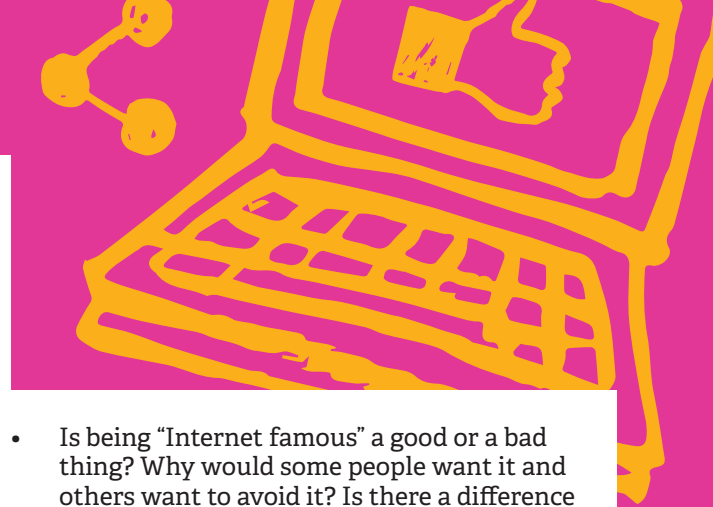
• Is being "Internet famous" a good or a bad thing? Why would some people want it and others want to avoid it? Is there a difference between doing this on purpose and having it happen accidentally? What are some of the benefits/drawbacks of Internet fame for the girl in the video?

• Why is it easier to hurt someone's feelings online than offline?

• What makes some pictures or videos turn into "memes" and spread?

• Do you feel it's important to always look good in a picture? Why or why not?

• When you post a picture, do you feel like other people are going to look at it critically? If so, how does that make you feel?

• How does it feel when you get "pranked" or get pulled into "drama" online?

• How is being online different for boys and girls?

Once everyone's had a chance to talk, have your group decide what they think are the two or three **most important issues** raised by the video.

TYING EVERYTHING BACK TOGETHER

When everyone at the workshop gets back together for the whole-group discussion, act as your group's spokesperson when sharing what they think are the most important issues. Point out some of the good points that were raised by members of your group and invite them to share their thoughts with the whole group as well.