The Parent Network:

SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUR KIDS

WORKSHOP GUIDE

Media Smarts

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Workshop Guide

Introduction

There's no denying that social networking is very popular with Canadian kids and teens: a 2014 survey conducted by MediaSmarts of students in grades 7-11 showed that 82 percent have a Facebook account, almost half use Twitter, and reading and posting on social networks are their top online activities. Social media bring with them a wide range of opportunities and challenges: while they are great tools for socializing with friends, keeping up with family members and bringing together communities of people with shared interests, they also present a lot of issues that parents need to be aware of. Some are well-publicized such as cyberbullying and excessive use, while others, such as data collection and privacy, may not be on parents' radar screens at all.

Understanding what kids are doing on social networks can be challenging – even if parents are on many of the same platforms. Kids use a variety of sites and platforms for a variety of reasons making their social networking life very complex. The purpose of *The Parent Network* workshop is to help parents better understand how their kids are using social networking and to provide them with tips and tools to ensure their experiences are positive.

The activities in this guide will give parents a chance to reflect and build on what they've learned during the presentation. These activities can be done in a group setting post-presentation, at home by the parent or at home as a family.

For the facilitator: Setting up for the post-presentation workshop activities

To accommodate different venues, this workshop includes activities that use Internet-connected devices as well as activities that can be done where there is no Internet connection available.

To help you plan your workshop, we recommend visiting the venue beforehand to find out what technologies are available. Depending on where you are going to present the workshop – a school, library or community centre – there may also be restrictions on access to some of the websites, which you will need to be aware of.

If you are planning on doing the "Setting up a social networking account" activity, you will want access to mobile devices as well as computers, because some of the social networking platforms that are suggested are only available as apps. We recommend you find out prior to hosting your workshop whether you will be able to access Wi-Fi and the necessary sites at the venue.

Activities for Internet-connected devices, such as computers, tablets and/or smartphones

Setting up a social networking account

For this activity, parents will set up an account on a social networking site that they currently don't use but is popular with their children's age group.

Step 1: Choosing the site and registering

On a flip chart or board, write down these social networks that are popular with Canadian kids.

- Instagram (available as an app only)
- Snapchat (available as an app only)
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Tumblr
- Kik Messenger (available as an app only)
- Ask.fm

Divide the parents into small groups for this activity based on which platforms they would like to learn more about. (Groups can be created through a simple show of hands, i.e. "If you would like to learn more about ____ come over here." If one platform has lots of parents, split them into smaller groups).

Set everyone up at Internet-connected computers in the room, or have them use their own devices such as a tablet or smartphone. Instruct the groups to either go to the website – or to the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play (Android) to download an app – for one of these platforms.

Distribute the [Creating a Strong Password](#) handout and discuss the steps to creating a secure password. Have them take a few minutes to set up an account with the social networking site of their choice, using the password formula in the handout (encourage them to try the "two-factor authentication" process).

After 5-10 minutes bring everyone together to share their experiences through answering the following questions:

- Which platform did you choose?
- How hard or easy was it to set up an account?
- What information did they ask you for?
- What information did you *have* to give and what did they just *want* you to give?
- How easy did they make it to tell the difference?

Did you look at the Terms of Service? Were they clear and easy to read? If not, what made them difficult to read? Were there any surprises?

Step 2: Review of tools and safety features

After parents have discussed the registration process, have them visit the site's safety center and review the tools, information and resources that are provided.

If there is no safety center, they can use the Social Network Checklist handout as a guide for finding and identifying tools and resources on the social networking platform they have chosen.

Give people about 10 minutes to do this step and then bring everyone back together to discuss their experiences.

Ask the participants:

- Based on your review of the safety and security features on this platform, what score might you give it out of 10?

- Based on your review, is there anything that you would want to specifically point out to your child?

Activities for when there are no Internet-connected computers or mobile devices available

Tips for Kids

Based on what they have seen and heard here today, ask parents to brainstorm tips for managing their child's and/or teen's social networking.

- Create 'stations' around the room under the headings "Setting up an account"; "Staying safe"; "Communication and trust"; "Maintaining balance"; "Image and reputation"; "Special considerations for girls"; "Special considerations for boys." Alternatively, have the parents come up with their own topics.

- Give each parent several post-it notes and ask them to write suggested tips and then post them at each station.

- As a group, review and discuss the tips that are posted and create a master tip sheet from parent's suggestions

Bringing everything together

Based on what they have learned at the workshop, ask parents to imagine that their son or daughter has just told them about a new social network and they want to get an account. What questions should they ask before saying yes or no?

Write down their suggested questions. Once this is done, distribute and review the handout Questions to Ask Your Kids about Social Networking to see if they missed or would add anything.

Note the final point on this handout: *Beyond questions about specific platforms, a good discussion starter with your kids is to brainstorm things you should NOT do on social networking*. Brainstorm with parents suggestions of things to avoid such as:

- Posting photos of you and/or your friends doing activities that are illegal (i.e. party pics where teens are drinking) or would get you or your friends into trouble
- Posting mean or cruel comments or pics
- Threatening people
- Posting or sharing things that are meant to be private (this is considered a huge faux-pas by young people)
- Oversharing personal info – leaving yourself open to hackers and creeps
- Posting things when you are feeling emotional
- NEVER assuming that anything you post or text is private… it's just too easy for things to be shared accidentally or on purpose. If you have something that would really hurt you if it got around, posting or texting it is not a good way to keep it confidential.

A very important point to make with your kids is that no one is perfect and sometimes we all make mistakes. If something bad happens, there are always ways to make it better or control the damage. Let your kids know that you are here for them if anything goes wrong.

Remind parents that the most important thing they can do to help their kids navigate social media is to talk to them – and to keep the conversation going!

Reviewing the Workshop Handouts and Tip Sheets

As a group, review the elements of the Social Networking Checklist handout.

Ask parents to indicate whether or not they have any rules at home for their children's use of social networking platforms. Distribute and review the Social Media Rules tip sheet. Is there anything parents would add?

For parents of teens, distribute and review the Think Before You Share and the Building Your Brand tip sheets.

Activities that can be done at home

Hands-On Family Activities

Sit down with your kids with a computer or mobile device and together use the Social Network Checklist to review a social networking site that they belong to or want to join.

Have your child introduce you to a social media platform they use which you don't. Have them take you through the steps of setting up an account, while teaching them how to make a secure password based on the formula in the Creating a Strong Password handout.

Go through the Social Media Rules tip sheet and use it to create your own family rules for social networking sites. Don't forget to include rules for parents: i.e. I will not post pictures of my kids online without their prior permission.

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Handouts

Handout 1:
Creating a Strong Password

You can make a strong password by taking a word (seven letters or longer) and changing some of the letters into numbers and characters.

Here's a formula that can help you do this:

- Choose a word that's at least seven letters long: **Bananas**

- Turn some of the letters into numbers or other characters: **B@n5na$**

- Finally, put the first and last letters of the service you're using somewhere in your password:

  - So this would be your Facebook password: **FB@n5na$k**

  - And this would be your Twitter password: **TB@n5na$r**

This way, your formula is consistent but your passwords will change depending on the site you're on. This makes it easier to remember the many passwords you have to keep straight.

To make your password really secure you can set up a **two-factor authentication**: that means when you try to log in a text or email is sent to a phone number or email address you have given the site. That way you can only log in if you know the username and the password and have access to that phone or email account. (Make sure it has a different password and username). This option is usually provided in the security settings and is a good step to take if you are using a computer that is shared by lots of other people.

Another important tip is to never share passwords with anyone outside the family. Older kids are more likely to share their passwords than younger ones – so talk to your teens about this.

An essential tip about passwords is to remember to log out when you're done. Many kids whose accounts have been "hacked" by their friends or siblings simply left their accounts logged in.

Handout 2:
Social Network Checklist

Name of site:

_____

Minimum age to join:

_____

Does the social network…

- ☐ Let you only submit basic info (name, age, email address or mobile number) to register
- ☐ Have a safety centre
- ☐ Have privacy tools to let you:
  - ▫ Control who sees your stuff
  - ▫ Control who can post things on your page
  - ▫ Control who contacts you
  - ▫ See if anyone has tagged you
- ☐ Have security settings to keep your account safe
- ☐ Let you block:
  - ▫ People
  - ▫ Apps
  - ▫ Web pages
- ☐ Have a Terms of Use policy that is easy to understand?

Handout 3:
Questions to Ask Your Kids about Social Networking

If your kids tell you they want to join a social networking platform, a good first question is "Tell me everything you know about it" – this can give you a pretty good idea of (a) their motivation and (b) how much they actually know.

Based on what you learn from that first question, you can dig deeper with questions like these:

- Why do you want to use it?
- What do you like about it?
- Who would you use it to connect with?
- Who do you know that's already on it?
- How can you control who can connect with you?
- How can you control who sees what you post on it?
- What can you do if somebody sees or shares something you didn't want them to?
- What can you do if someone is bothering you or being mean to you?

Beyond questions about specific platforms, a good discussion starter with your kids is to brainstorm things you SHOULD NOT do on social networking – and talk about why they are not smart choices.

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Tip Sheets

Social media rules
– tip sheet

Having a family agreement or set of ground rules for using social networks is a good idea. It's a great way for parents and kids to work together on how to be safe, wise and responsible online. Here are some ideas:

- I will only follow people I know personally.

- I will always show an adult any message or post that makes me feel uncomfortable or threatened.

- I will never share any personal information about myself, such as my age, where I live, and where I go to school.

- I will keep my whereabouts to myself: I will turn off any location settings that tell people exactly where I am or where a photograph was taken.

- I will never publish anything I wouldn't want my parents, teachers, and grandparents to see, because photos can be shared widely, with anyone, in a matter of seconds.

- When creating a password, I will make one up that is hard for someone else to guess but easy for me to remember. I will never reveal it to anyone (except my parents or a trusted adult) - not even my best friend.

- I will always check my privacy settings and go over them with my parents.

- I will practice the golden rule and always treat others as I would like to be treated. I will T.H.I.N.K. before I leave a comment or send a message: is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind?

- I will not upload or tag photos of other people without their permission.

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CANADA'S CENTRE FOR DIGITAL AND MEDIA LITERACY

THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE

Tips from Facebook and MediaSmarts

We always hear that sharing is a good thing. And thanks to technology, we can share our ideas, opinions, pictures and videos with our friends and other people.

Most of the time, sharing *is* good. But if we aren't thoughtful about how we share, we run the risk of hurting ourselves or someone else. Also, remember that the things you share with your friends can end up being shared with others. That's why it's important to think before you share.

YOUR OWN STUFF

Whenever you're sharing things about you – whether it's a picture, video or personal things like your phone number – keep in mind that it could easily end up being seen by people you didn't want it sent to.

Also, it's not a good idea to share things when you're feeling really emotional – whether you're angry, sad, or excited. Calm down first and then decide if it's really a good idea.

Next, ask yourself:

- ✅ Is this how I want people to see me?
- ✅ Could somebody use this to hurt me? Would I be upset if they shared it with others?
- ✅ What's the worst thing that could happen if I shared this?

Passwords are not social: There's some things you need to be really careful about sharing. Sometimes friends share passwords with each other when all is good, but unfortunately this can turn into a nightmare later.

An image lasts forever: Some people think sharing a nude or sexy photo with a girlfriend or boyfriend – or someone they hope will be their girlfriend or boyfriend – shows they love or trust them. Be extra careful in this situation and think – an image can outlast a relationship.

Remember that if somebody asks you to share something you are not comfortable with you have the right to say no. Nobody who loves or respects you will pressure or threaten you.

Gone in seconds, but maybe not gone forever: Some apps or social networking sites promise to auto-delete images or videos after a few seconds of viewing. But there's ways around this – the viewer could take a screenshot – so you still have to make smart decisions about sharing.

FacebookTIPS:

1

Passwords are not social. Don't share your password with anyone. For additional security tips go to: facebook.com/help/securitytips

2

Check your privacy settings at facebook.com/privacy to see who can view your posts.

3

Check the audience selector tool each time you post on Facebook in order to make sure you are sharing it with your desired audience.

OTHER PEOPLE'S STUFF

Most of the time when people send things to you, they're okay with you sharing them with other people. If you don't know for sure, think twice before doing this. Even better, ask the person who sent it if they mind if you share. The same is true if you're sharing photos or videos that have other people in them: ask before you tag, re-post or pass them on.

If someone shares something with you with somebody else in it, ask yourself:

- ✅ Did the person who sent this to me mean for it to be shared?
- ✅ Did they have permission from the person who's in it?
- ✅ How would I feel if somebody shared something like this with me in it?

If what you received makes that person look bad, would embarrass them, or could hurt them if it got around, *don't* pass it on. The person who sent it to you may have meant it as a joke, but jokes can be a lot less funny when something is seen by the wrong person.

A lot of people – boys especially – get pressured by their friends to share nude photos of their girlfriends or boyfriends. It can be hard to stand up to this pressure, but you have to think about how much giving in could hurt you and your girlfriend/boyfriend.

FIXING THINGS IF THEY GO WRONG

Everyone makes bad choices sometimes. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't do everything you can to fix things.

If you shared something you shouldn't have, the first step is to ask the people you sent it to not to pass it on.

If someone else posted something you sent them, start by asking them to take it down. It's actually pretty effective most of the time. Remember not to do anything while you're mad: give yourself time to cool down and, if you can, talk to the person offline.

If they refuse to take it down, don't try to get back at them by sharing private things they sent you, harassing them or getting your friends to gang up on them. For one thing, this almost always makes things worse. For another, the more you get back at them, the more it might look like it's just as much your fault as theirs.

If you're tagged in a photo that you don't like, remember that a lot of photo-sharing and social networking sites may let you take your name off any pictures you've been tagged in. On Facebook, you can also select to review posts you are tagged in before they post to your timeline under your privacy settings: facebook.com/privacy.

take note!

If you're on Facebook and don't feel comfortable confronting someone yourself, or don't quite know what to say, Facebook has a Social Reporting tool with some messages you can use and ways to get a parent, teacher or trusted friend to help you out.

For more serious things, for instance if it's a partly or fully nude picture or video, if it's defamatory (it's not true and hurts your reputation) or if it's being used to harass or bully you, you can ask the site or service that was used to share it to take it down. In those cases you can report it to the police too.

If you are in a situation where a person is threatening to share a nude photo of you unless you provide more nude photos – you should involve a trusted adult and contact the police right away. This is unacceptable behaviour and in many countries it is illegal.
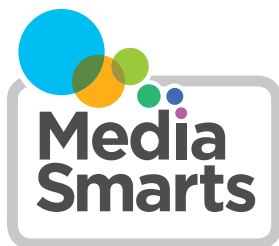
How to use the Social Reporting Tool

To learn more about social reporting or reporting abusive content on Facebook, go to facebook.com/report.

Remember that you are not alone – you can always talk to your parents, a teacher or counsellor, another adult you trust, or a help-line to get advice and support.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CHECK OUT THE LINKS BELOW:

MediaSmarts
mediasmarts.org

Facebook Family Safety Center
facebook.com/safety

Bullying Prevention Tips
facebook.com/safety/bullying

Facebook Help Center
facebook.com/help

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE PRESENCE ONLINE

Like it or not, if you use the Internet you have an online identity. Some people call this your "brand." What's a brand? Think about a brand of soft drink, or computer, or jeans, or a band or a sports team. You probably have a certain idea about each one – what it's like, who buys it, and so on. Maybe you wear a branded t-shirt sometimes because you like what it says about you. That's what your online brand is: it's what people think of you based on what they see about you online.

Big companies spend millions of dollars making sure that you see their brand the way they want you to. You don't have to put that much time or money into it, but there are a few pretty simple things you can do to make sure that the "you" people see online is how you want to be seen.

1 SEARCH YOURSELF

A good place to start is to use a search engine to see what information about you is easily available. Try searching for your name – but don't stop there, especially if it's a fairly common one. Think about the search terms someone else might use if they were looking for information about you. Would they use a nickname? Your middle name or initials? A likely misspelling of your name? Maybe they add your home-town, or your school, or where you work or some of your hobbies. Type your name into the search bar and see what other search terms are suggested. Also, you can try putting "yourname".com (or .ca) into the address bar and see if anyone else has registered that site. If not, it's probably worth a few dollars each year to register it yourself, even if you're not going to use it right away.

Do the same thing with any social networks you're on. Someone may have created a spoof account with your name, or there may be someone with a similar name that people might confuse you with. Make sure to do an image search of your name, too!

2 IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, ASK TO HAVE IT TAKEN DOWN

If you don't like what you find, the first step is to try to get it taken down. It may be surprising, but just asking the person who posted it is pretty effective: according to one study, four out of five Internet users who've asked someone to take material down were successful. If that doesn't work, you can find out which ISP hosts the site and ask them to take it down. ISPs will usually only do this if the material is defamatory (untrue and hurts your reputation), if it's hate material or if what the site is doing could reasonably be called cyberbullying.

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3 — OUT WITH THE BAD, IN WITH THE GOOD

If there are things about you online that you don't like – or if searching for information about you leads to information about someone else who people might think is you – then you need to make sure that there's enough positive material about you online to drown it out. Blogging, posting videos, commenting, leaving online reviews – anything that leaves a mark online is good so long as it sends the message you want. Don't worry that everything you do has to make you look good; so long as it doesn't make you look bad, it's building your online presence and overriding any bad stuff that may be out there.

If there's another person online that people are mixing up with you, think about using a variation on your name. For instance, if there's another John Smith who got caught selling fake Stanley Cup tickets, you may decide to go by Johnny Smith or John Q. Smith instead of trying to tell people you're not him.

4 — BUILD A BASE

An important step in building your brand is to have a home base online. This could be a website or a blog (but don't use a social network profile as your home base – we'll explain why below) – what matters is that it's a place where you control your message and where everything you do online links back to. Why is that important? Because a lot of search engines count links when they're doing a search, so the more you link back to your home base, the higher it will rank in any search for you. If you registered a website with your name, like we talked about in "Search Yourself" above, that's the perfect place to make your home base.

You can have a "home base" picture, too: that's a picture of yourself that you like (if you don't want to use a real picture, there are lots of places online where you can create a cartoon version of yourself) that you use anytime you're asked for a picture online – social networks, commenting systems and so on. Having a single picture that you use everywhere helps to build you identity online.

5 — DON'T LET YOUR FRIENDS CONTROL YOUR BRAND

Why not use a social network profile as your home base? Because you don't have full control over what happens there. Friends can post to your profile, comment on what you post, and link to things that you have no control over. You also can't ever fully control your privacy on social networks because you're counting on your friends, and their friends, to make good decisions.

That doesn't mean that you shouldn't have any social network accounts: actually you should have an account on any social network a lot of your friends are using, even if you don't do much with it, just to make sure that you have some control over your identity there. Just don't link back to it from other places online.

6 — THINK ABOUT WHO YOU ARE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S SPACES

As well as making sure that your online spaces say good things about you, keep in mind what kind of impression you're making in the spaces you don't control – other people's social network profiles, for example, or public online spaces like games and online communities. Being a good "guest" and being a positive member of an online community can be a huge part of building your online brand. The Golden Rule – treat other people the way you'd like to be treated – is a good start, but you can also look for ways to be helpful and contribute to the online communities that you're a part of.

7 — DON'T MIX UP REPUTATION WITH CELEBRITY

None of this means that you need to spend all your time thinking about every word and picture that you post, wondering how people will see you. It doesn't matter how many people are paying attention to you online: what matters is that the things you do online build a consistent image of you that reflects how you want to be seen.

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