



Social Media & EMOTIONS

By Ellie Cornecelli

Social media is a huge part of our everyday lives. We can consume ourselves with posting, sharing, and filtering, as well as selfie-ing, liking, and commenting, from the moment we wake up. The social pressures to stay in constant digital communication can be overwhelming for a young adolescent student. As teenagers develop, their ability to self-regulate is still gaining momentum. To be successful at the moment and to remain on a successful trajectory students must learn to regulate their emotions and behaviors.

An adolescent's awareness of how a message may be received and the perception of its tone may not be fully realized. Interpreting online communication can be tricky for adolescents without non-verbal cues to help them decipher the true intent of the message. Students may or may not realize that their response has an angry, sarcastic, or vulgar tone. The Pew Research Center (2018) finds that 95 percent of teens in the U.S. have a smartphone and 45 percent say they are on the Internet "almost constantly." Adolescents are more likely to respond quickly and in real time, meaning that their ability to reflect on situations and the emotions that are evoked from them is reduced.

Tools for Social Media Self-Regulation

Bringing this communication challenge to a student's attention can be challenging. Finding creative ways to present alternatives to online responses can have lasting effects. Role-playing is always an effective tool when students have

a choice in their roles. The goal is to encourage students to become more aware of their own emotions and self-regulation skills. Recommend that students pause before responding online if they are feeling an intense emotion. Taking a moment to discover why they may be having such strong emotions, as well as naming their emotions, can also be helpful in processing. Writing their feelings down, or writing a letter that only the student will read, can be a healthy way to state the words they want to post but without having any lasting negative consequences.

Comments left online can leave a lasting digital footprint. Adolescents have a reputation to uphold; therefore, seeking alternatives to quick responses are ideal. Sleeping on it and deciding in the morning is an effective way to allow time for reflection. We always feel differently the next day. Emotions could be stronger; however, they are likely to be more subdued after a full night's rest. Reaching out to a trusted friend or family member to discuss feelings and emotions may be just what the student needs to release, therefore dulling the desire to reply at all.

Social and emotional skills need practice, just as academic skills need practice. Model and reinforce self-regulation when communicating online. Most of all, encourage students to have patience with themselves as they foster kindness and empathy in the world, both IRL and virtually. 🍀

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Social Media & Emotions

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