

PART 3: Social Networking -- Keeping in Touch

Today, kids "hang out" and talk with friends in virtual spaces through instant messaging, text messaging, chat rooms and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Use these questions with the program chapter *A Revolution in Classrooms and Social Life*.

3.1. One teen describes MySpace and Facebook as fun because they are "a section of the Internet that's your own." How is a profile -- an online space -- similar to and different from other parts of the world that are your own, like your bedroom, school locker or diary?

3.2. As shown in the program, social networking sites can be used as a way to "talk junk," insult others or hash out conflicts. Is fighting online a relatively safe way to express negative emotions in responding to others (without having to deal with them face to face)? Or does online fighting do more harm than good?

3.3. The program describes social networking sites as places where kids post pictures, accumulate friends, post messages to others and describe themselves. What other kinds of things do teens and young adults do on social networking sites that aren't mentioned?

PART 4: Identity Play

Jessica Long, the shy girl next door, creates a new identity online as the popular Autumn Edows. The Internet allows young people to express themselves, experiment with different perspectives, and play with aspects of their identity. Use these questions with the program chapter *Self Expression, Trying On New Identities*.

4.1. Some teens, like Autumn Edows, feel like they can be someone else online. Sara, however, mentioned that while she has to play a role in real life, she can be more authentic online. What do you feel when you're online? Can you be more real and authentic, who you really are, or do you enjoy feeling like you're someone else, or playing around with your identity?

4.2. When you think of stuff to post on your profile, who is the main audience you're communicating to? Who are other potential audiences that might be viewing, but that you might not think of when you post things?

4.3 In the program, teens are shown talking about the photos of themselves that they post online. Some people may post images of themselves looking like musicians, models or celebrities. Profiles may perpetuate stereotypes of others because we only get a glimpse of them through their photographs, their interests in music and movies, and pictures and comments from their friends. Do you think it is easier to stereotype people online than in real life? Why or why not? What information does a photograph tell about a person?

4.4 What information does a person's music selections provide? How do popular culture and the mass media affect people's selection of different types of images and music for their profiles?

4.5. Before the Internet, in order to be seen by the world, you had to be portrayed in some form of mass media, and you had to be famous in some respect -- in the news, in politics or as a celebrity. Now anyone can be seen online by anyone else in the world. Some people have become famous for videos or photos they've posted (such as Autumn Edows). What are the positive and negative consequences of blurring the line between being a celebrity and a regular person?

PART 5: Parenting, Privacy and Control

Parents are challenged in managing their kids' media use and are anxious about online predators, what their kids post online, and whether their kids are engaging in harmful online behavior. Use these questions with the program chapters *The Child Predator Fear* and *Private Worlds Outside Parents' Reach?*

5.1. In the program, we see parents who are actively monitoring teens' online use and other parents who are not. What factors play a role in whether or not a parent will be involved in monitoring teens' online media use? From your point of view, what forms of involvement are most useful? Least useful?

5.2. Shows like "To Catch a Predator" on *Dateline NBC* contribute to parental anxiety about online media. What elements of this FRONTLINE program are likely to increase parents' fears? What elements of the program might be reassuring?

5.3. Evan Skinner e-mailed parents in her community after she learned about the photos taken when her son and other students went to a rock concert and got drunk. Ryan Halligan's dad contacted the parent of another teen whose Web site was full of suicidal thoughts and feelings. Why did they do this? What are some consequences of reaching out to other parents to share concerns?

PART 6: Online Relationships -- Healthy or Unhealthy?

Some teens, such as Sara and Ryan Halligan, experienced the Internet in ways that were damaging. Sara was drawn to support sites for eating disorders, while Ryan experienced harassment through cyberbullying. In both cases, parents did not realize what was going on in their kids' online worlds. Use these questions with the program chapters *Private Worlds Outside Parents' Reach?* and *Cyberbullying*.

6.1. Teens turn to the Internet to find information about health, such as changes the body goes through, nutrition, sexuality issues, mental and emotional issues, and substance abuse. A teen who's seeking support for a problem might surf the Web for answers, bring up the problem in a chat room or blog post, put up a video or join an online support group. In the program, we see two teens using online media to find information and express damaging thoughts and behaviors. In Sara's case, she found tips that supported and praised anorexic behavior by browsing and chatting on "ana" sites. After experiencing online and offline bullying, Ryan Halligan chatted with a friend about killing himself and learned about various ways to commit suicide. Why might someone be attracted to dangerous or unhealthy communication and Web sites with dangerous information? Why might someone want to create such sites?

6.2. Teasing, lying, gossiping, threatening, spreading rumors or harassing online (and offline) can severely affect people's self-concept and self-esteem and have an impact on their emotional state. In the program, we see one girl who describes flirting with boys and then revealing she was just kidding. She explains: "You wouldn't do that to someone's face, but online is completely different. ... No one can do anything. You're at your house, they're at their house." What are some of the short- and longer-term consequences of this behavior for life online and in the real world?

PART 7: Post-Viewing

The program ends with high school graduation and some changes. Sara has received help for her eating disorder; Greg decides it's time to disconnect from the Internet as he starts college; and Autumn Edows' parents are supportive of her online identity. How do parents and teens better understand life online? Use these questions with the program chapter *Updates*.

7.1. At the end of the program, we see the parents of Autumn Edows, who are now supportive of their daughter's online identity. Her father says: "People say things about the Internet, and they talk about the danger. From where I stand, I'm glad it's there." But earlier in the show, we learned that they had made her delete the photos of herself from her computer. What must have happened to cause this dramatic shift in the parents' thinking?

7.2. At the end of the program, Greg decides it's time for him to "disconnect" by going to the Coast Guard Academy, where he will spend seven weeks without cell phones or the Internet. Have you ever thought about "disconnecting" from it all? Do you think it would be easy or difficult? What would you enjoy or dislike about disconnecting?