Tech Control 4

Social Media Influencers & Extreme Content

Lesson Plan – Key Stages 3 to 5

Overview

Social media influencers are shaping young people's opinions and behaviours in a profound way. For the most part, they are being influenced positively. However young people are also being exposed to extreme and potentially dangerous views.

This lesson has therefore been developed to help students to consider the impact extreme, harmful content social media influencers share, can have on themselves and others. It will also provide clear solutions for managing harmful experiences they may face.

It has been designed to offer a blended learning experience and features the Influencer Culture & Extreme Views module created by Digital Awareness UK and the Head's Conference.

Lesson aims

- Identify what extreme and harmful content on social media is
- Recognise why extreme, harmful content can be dangerous and the impact it has on society and wellbeing
- Know how to identify extreme views and false information that influencers may share
- Understand how social media algorithms work and why students are viewing harmful content
- Reflect on experiences students may have had when being exposed to extreme, harmful content
- Consider steps students can take to protect themselves and others from being exposed to such content

Notes for teachers

⚠️ **In advance of the lesson, please ensure that students have access to the Influencer Culture & Extreme Views module**. Contact info@digitalawarenessuk.com for your school's unique Learner Link and information on how to sign up. See the Module Handbook for further information.

⚠️ As this lesson plan aims to tackle issues surrounding harmful social media influencers, some students may mention the names of specific influencers in the classroom. **We would encourage teachers not to mention any harmful influencers they may have heard of and to encourage their students to do the same** to avoid exposing them to harmful content.

⚠️ Some of the topics discussed in this lesson may be triggering or upsetting for students, so **it's important that topics (such as misogyny or homophobia) are discussed in a sensitive manner** and that students are made aware of the support systems available to them.

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Lesson breakdown (45 – 50 minutes)

This is the recommended structure for the lesson. The Influencer Culture & Extreme Views module takes approximately 20 minutes to finish.

PART 1 (10 mins)

Warm up activity

This activity is designed to ensure students understand what social media influencers are and reflect on how they may have been influenced by them

PART 2 (10 - 15 mins)

Group activity

Challenge students to brainstorm ways to spot dangerous advice

PART 3 (20 mins)

Complete module

Complete the Influencer Culture & Extreme Views module to upskill students on understanding and managing extreme online views

PART 4 (5 mins)

Plenary

Recap key learnings and encourage students to share any changes they may make to ensure they are using technology safely

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Part 1 | Warm-up exercise: How does an influencer influence me?

- Explain that social media influencers are often regarded as people with a large and active audience on social media who are on social media that inspire or guide the actions of others

- Ask students to take a moment to think about anyone who they have come across on social media who inspires them or who influences what they do (without saying any names out load)

- Explain that they all need to stand up and that you are going to read out a number of statements. They will need to sit down if the statement applies to them (see statements on following page)

- Reassure students that there is no right or wrong answer and that they aren't going to have to explain their answers, this is simply a game to encourage them to consider if they are influenced by people on social media

How does an influencer influence me?

Sit down if…

1. You've ever bought a product (e.g. a game or clothing) after it was recommended to you by an influencer

2. You've ever followed health advice (e.g. how to get fit) from an influencer

3. You've supported a cause (e.g. a campaign against climate change) because you heard an influencer talking about it

4. You've changed the way you see a group of people (in a positive or negative way) based on an influencer's opinions of them

5. You've invested money in something an influencer has recommended

At the end, explain that all these things can be good but that they can also bad, and in some incidences, dangerous. Encourage students to reflect on situations when these situations could be positive or negative for the people who have been influenced (see examples on following page)

1. **You've ever bought a product (e.g. a game or clothing) after it was recommended to you by an influencer**

   - *Positive*: The product you bought is useful and you're happy with it
   - *Negative*: The influencer has been paid to recommend the product and the recommendation isn't genuine e.g. they may not have used the product and are falsely encouraging people to buy it based on their experience

2. **You've ever followed health advice (e.g. how to get fit) from an influencer**

   - *Positive*: The health advice was factually correct and evidence-based and your health is improving based on the advice
   - *Negative*: The advice isn't factually correct and your health could be compromised as a result of following it

3. **You've supported a cause (e.g. a campaign against climate change) because you heard an influencer talking about it**

   - *Positive*: The influencer is encouraging you to support causes that will result in positive changes e.g. improve the environment
   - *Negative*: The influencer is encouraging you to support causes that could be harmful or dangerous to others e.g. encourage people to discriminate against others

4. **You've changed the way you see a group of people (in a positive or negative way) based on an influencer's opinions of them**

   - *Positive*: You are discouraged from treating people from different communities unfairly because of what the influencer has said
   - *Negative*: The influencer has encouraged you to be hateful towards specific groups of people

5. **You've invested money in something an influencer has recommended**

   - *Positive*: You are making money (legally) following advice the influencer has given
   - *Negative*: You lose money through scams or false information shared by the influencer about how to invest your money

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Part 2 | Group exercise

Ask students how they might spot information influencers share, that could be dangerous - whether it's advice about beauty, health, how to treat others or how to make money.

Display slide eight of this lesson plan on the screen. Then split the class into groups and tell them to pretend that they are working for a social media company that wants its users to learn how to spot dangerous information that influencers could be sharing on their app.

Challenge students to come up with five tips on how to spot dangerous advice and present their ideas back to the class.

See ideas for tips on the right.

- **The advice seems unrealistic e.g. 'Make £10,000 in a week' or 'double your muscle mass in a day'**
- **There is no evidence from credible places (e.g. academic research) to back up what is being said**
- **The images or videos the influencer has used to provide evidence look like they could have been edited**
- **The advice being shared could be harmful or dangerous if followed**

Part 3 | Complete module

Instruct students to complete the Influencer Culture & Extreme Views module, which has been created to equip students with the skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of harmful influencer behaviour and make conscious choices regarding their social media consumption.

Share the Learner Link with students and don't forget to check how they are progressing by clicking on the Analytics Link (see Module Handbook for advice).

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Part 4 | Plenary

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Recap on learnings from the lesson:

- ✓ People's opinions and actions can be influenced by influencers on social media
- ✓ They can be influenced in negative and positive ways
- ✓ Some advice from influencers can be dangerous
- ✓ There are many ways people can identify dangerous advice from influencers to help protect themselves and others from harm

Opportunity to extend

This is the fourth instalment of the Tech Control series. Educational resources developed in previous Tech Control campaigns can be found here.

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5 tips on how to spot dangerous advice from influencers on our app...

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