Social Media and Violence

Social media has integrated itself into many aspects of our lives. Whether we use it to bridge friendships, stay informed, or express ourselves, social media offers us a unique way to stay connected with the world around us. However, one does not need to look very far to experience the darker side of social media use. News reports of cyberbullying, gang violence, criminal activity, and suicide fueled by social media is shocking and troubling. The tragic stories of Iquan Williams’ murder, Joshua Arrington’s shooting and resulting leg amputation, and Rebecca Sedwick’s suicide caution us to the serious consequences of harmful social media use.

Harmful social media use does not stay in cyberspace. Often times the ramifications spill into the real world, and what at first seems like an unprovoked event is illuminated by a review of the social media activity that preceded it. Unfortunately, information on how to respond and prevent harm through social media is not clearly stated or available, and warning signs are left unreported until it’s too late. The aim of this curriculum is to help youth recognize and react to harmful social media behavior, and to feel confident in their ability to do so. Whether the solution is to listen to others, actively mediate an argument, or call an anti-violence organization, youth will be given the tools to recognize harmful use and know the options available to help their peers. Violence on social media is a serious problem, but it is one that can be prevented. This curriculum will serve as a positive step towards providing information to youth on how to assist, report, and most importantly, stay safe on social media.

Instructions

The following packet provides tools to discuss healthy social media use with youth and anti-violence staff. While we see unhealthy behavior on the rise across social media users, these tools are designed to discuss violence, harm, and other criminal activities that are broadcasted on social media. These tools are meant to spark discussion, help youth navigate harmful social media use, and provide steps on how to maintain privacy. Also included are tools for anti-violence staff covering how to recognize harmful posts that can result in real world violence and to maintain a professional social media presence. Below is a description of each tool:

- **Responsible Social Media Posting** – This flyer is designed for a general population of adolescent students. It points out a number of harmful behaviors occurring on social media and a variety of coping skills available to them if this situation occurs.

- **Crime and Social Media** – This flyer is designed for youth already involved in gun violence. It identifies usage that can result in arrest or violent retaliation and a variety of coping skills available to them if this situation occurs.

- **Risk for Violence On Social Media** – This flyer identifies the types of communication that amplify, promote, or provoke violence. It also includes a risk assessment strategy to understand how likely the social media content will result in real world violence, along with ways to monitor or intervene with youth once harmful or violent content is identified.

- **Managing Your Social Media Activity for Work** – This tool assists staff in identifying how to maintain their self-expression and social life on social media, while also remaining visible as a respected professional.

- **Privacy Tips** – This flyer provides general tips on how to update privacy settings. Since social media is constantly evolving, this sheet gives suggestions on how to find privacy information, and where this information is most likely located on websites and mobile apps.
• **Social Media Timelines** – Two timelines are provided to illustrate how social media use influences real world violence. The timelines outline social media posts and violent incidents from two different indictments of six Manhattan crews and the killing of Kierra’onna Rice in Birmingham, Alabama.

• **Student Lesson Plan** – The 40 minute lesson plan guides youth to identify harmful and violent social media content they witness, experience, or post. This activity is supported by discussing the associated risks for real world violence and exploring actions steps on how to handle such content.
  - News Examples – This document includes short summaries of news articles pertaining to how poor social media use has led to violence, arrests, unemployment, and rejection from college admissions.
  - Harmful Posts Exercise and Key – This handout provides four examples of harmful social media posts, asks students to perform a risk assessment and discuss how they would intervene on the post. The Exercise Key provides answers and further discussion questions on the scenarios.

The Citizens Crime Commission of New York City has identified several life skills needed to encourage healthy social media behavior, including empathy and grieving. These concepts are covered in detailed “How To Guides” provided below for leaders interested in addressing these concerns further with their participants, students, and peers. These guides outline and define the topic, explain why they are important, how they are relevant to social media use, and how to promote and build these healthy life skills.

• **Empathy How-to Guide**

• **Grief How-to Guide**
Always be careful about what you post online

Employers, schools, and the police can see what you post online. They will also use this information to make important decisions about whether to hire, accept, or investigate you. Keep in mind that social media is not a private space and what you post can be shared in ways that might hurt you or people you care about.

Take a moment to think about what you are posting before you do, ask yourself how will this affect my future?

Posts that can hurt you include:

- Pictures with drugs and alcohol or discussing using or selling drugs or alcohol.
- Sexually suggestive pictures/posts (nudity, partial nudity, sexual poses, sexual language)
  - Examples: Half naked people as cover photos, dirty talk, revealing photos of yourself, photos of sex acts, videos of provocative dancing/behavior, posting sexual lyrics.
- Bullying others through posts/statuses, even when no one is specifically named.
  - Examples: Liking a mean status/post, harassing someone online, posting passive aggressive statuses against a person, openly threatening another, reposting mean/embarrassing videos/pictures/posts.
- Aggressive comments and lots of cursing/swearing.
  - Examples: Rude picture memes, ranting about someone or something, promoting a fight, cursing/swearing, violent song lyrics.
- Racist, sexist, or any discriminatory comments.
  - Examples: referring to women, men, different races, religion, and sexual orientations using derogatory names, anything that makes fun of a group of people and promotes stereotypes.
- Criminal activity and putting yourself at risk for becoming a target for violence.
  - Examples: pictures with illegal drugs such as weed, photos with guns, videos of fights, pictures with lots of cash, representing a crew or gang.

What you post can lead to violence

When an argument starts on the street, just a few people might see it.

When it goes online, it seems like the whole world is watching.

This makes it less-likely that someone will back down, and that often leads to violence…

What should you do if someone threatens you or starts a fight with you online?

- Walk away from the computer and/or phone.
- Distract yourself and do something to calm yourself down. For example: shower, yell into a pillow, workout, or take deep breaths.
- Talk to someone, such as an outreach worker, community leader, and/or family member.
- Pay attention to your body when you’re angry – jaw clenching, hands tightening, sweating, etc.
- Think about how responding may hurt you or those close to you.
  - If you post back or retaliate what could happen? What could happen to your friends or family?
- Ignore them or unfriend and block them. Don’t be “friends” online if you don’t get along in real life.
- Take screen shots of the posts so you can show them to someone who can help you.
Crime and Social Media

What you post can lead to violence and arrest

When an argument starts on the street, just a few people might see it.

When it goes online, it seems like the whole world is watching.

This makes it less-likely that someone will back down, and that often leads to violence…

Specific posts that put you at risk for becoming a victim and getting arrested include posting, liking, sharing, or commenting on posts that promote violence or crew/gang activity, such as:

- Calling out rivals:
  - Naming rivals with Ks, pictures of rivals, posting court documents & info.
  - Pictures in rival turf.
  - Nasty messages to rivals.
  - Threatening to kill or shoot someone or a rival group.
  - Pictures/videos with guns, weapons, cash, drugs, gang signs, fights, mobbing, robberies, & other crimes.
  - Buying & selling guns over private messages, chats, or secret groups.
  - Threatening, provoking, or taunting others.
  - Promoting a crew or gang.

- These posts have led to people getting hurt, killed, fired, suspended, expelled, and arrested.

What should you do if someone threatens you or starts a fight with you online?

- **Walk away** from the computer and/or phone.
- Distract yourself and do something to **calm yourself down**. For example: shower, yell into a pillow, workout, or take deep breaths.
- **Talk to someone**, such as an outreach worker, community leader, and/or family member.
- **Pay attention to your body when you’re angry** – jaw clenching, hands tightening, sweating, etc.
- Think about how **responding may hurt you** or those close to you.
  - If you post back or retaliate what could happen? What could happen to your friends or family?
- Ignore them or **de-friend and block them**. Don’t be “friends” online if you don’t get along in real life.
- Take **screen shots** of the posts so you can show them to someone who can help you.
Risk for Violence on Social Media

Currently, harmful use of social media has led to violence. In order to prevent retaliations, fights, and shootings it is important to monitor and recognize threats on social media and work together to respond to them.

**Monitoring online activity:**

- If you have a social media account, you can follow or friend program participants in order to monitor their behavior and those of their friends or rivals on social media.
- There are different types of communication that can spark conflict, but they also occur at different risk levels.

**Different types of social media activity:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Communication Type</th>
<th>Posting Behavior</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Low Risk** | Self-promotion       | • Posting gang signs  
                          • Statuses representing a crew  
                          • Bragging and promoting violence  
                          • Graffiti                        | Bragging about affiliation with gangs or violence in order to gain status, respect, and self-esteem. |
| **Medium Risk** | Criminal Activity | • Mobbing videos  
                          • Pictures/videos of drug use  
                          • Bragging about crimes  
                          • Pictures of cash               | Any content that links the user with illegal activity.                                           |
|             | General Threats     | • “Somebody gotta die;”  
                          • “I’ll give money to the next guy to clap a [rival gang member]”  
                          • Crew name with a “K” after it  
                          • Trying to meet up for violence (WYA = where you at?) | Non-specific, ill-planned threats against a rival crew or unnamed person.                         |
|             | Arguing             | • Threads of comments or messages that show back and forth arguing with others and bullying | Having a public argument with someone that is clearly not a rational discussion or debate but involves aggressive responses, like meet me on the block/come say that to my face/ meet at a certain time, etc. |
| **High Risk** | Weapons             | • Selling or purchasing guns  
                          • Posing with guns/weapons  
                          • Posting about carrying a weapon | Any activity that highlights a youth’s access to weapons.                                         |
|             | Taunting            | • Videos of beatings  
                          • Embarrassing pictures  
                          • Pictures on other gang’s turf  
                          • Posts of Orders of Protection  
                          • “Stop Snitching” posts     | Posting content meant to embarrass, shame, taunt, or intimidate another person.                   |
|             | Specific Threats    | • Naming or tagging a person you want to shoot or harm  
                          • Sending a death threat to a rival  
                          • A specific name with a “K” at the end of it  
                          • Posting a picture of a person to target for violence  
                          • Naming a specific location for violence (certain blocks, party, housing development, etc) | Targeted, well-planned, and intentional threats against a specific person.                      |

*All of the low and medium risk behaviors have the ability to turn into High Risk activity and should therefore be closely monitored when discovered, especially when content is reposted or shared by lots of other people.*
Risk for Violence on Social Media

Risk level guidelines:

- **High-Risk**: Content that shows the participant has easy access to weapons, is life threatening, dangerous, includes specific threats against a person, location, or crew, displays violence like videos of previous fights (these often trigger retaliations when they get posted and reposted), or suggests a crime is about to happen.

- **Medium-Risk**: Content that is likely to cause a serious argument, but no one is in physical danger yet, discusses or shows drugs, cash, mobbing, brags about crime, recruits people for a fight, promotes or shows youth drinking or using drugs (especially if the teen is alone).

- **Low-Risk**: Content that is mean or offensive in a general way, is attention-seeking, or promotes crews or groups.

What you should do once you find an online conflict:

Follow the progress of the comments and make sure they do not escalate in seriousness.

Use the risk level chart and guidelines to help determine the risk and use your best judgment when deciding if violence is possible.

Once you make a decision about the post, here are some options of how to intervene:

- Monitor the post to make sure it is not escalating.
  - For example, are people responding to the post, is it getting reposted?
- If violence is about to happen or involves a participant that is involved in an ongoing conflict, you should tell a Violence Interrupter and Outreach Worker on staff what might happen.
- Tell other people that might be near or going to a threatened location so they can avoid the area, especially participants.
  - Posts about bringing a gun to a party.
  - Posts that they are carrying a weapon and are traveling somewhere.
  - Posts that a certain block will be hot.
  - Posts about mobbing/ fights in a specific area.
- Show them that getting in a fight online or posting harmful content can mess up their plans.
- If someone is posting about involvement in the criminal justice system (court cases, arrests, etc.), remind the youth that this can affect their future (ex: employment, school admission).
- Save the posts/videos/tweets with a screen shot and keep a record of who is fighting with whom in order to fully understand the dynamics between individuals. These records may come in handy.
- Many youth use private messaging to provoke others and these threats might not be obvious, so you should tell youth not to friend rival crew members or just block them.
- If you feel the situation is beyond your abilities to intervene and think there is a strong chance of violence, call 911 for help, it might save a life.
Managing Your Social Media Activity For Work

Social media can be a great tool to connect with, build relationships with, and monitor your program participants. At the same time, it is also a place where you can maintain personal relationships with your friends, and express who you are.

It is important to remember, the information you post to your social media page can be seen by multiple people, including your boss, future bosses, and program participants. Make sure you are familiar with your organization’s policies around appropriate social media use, this will allow you to maintain your self-expression and social life, while also remaining visible as a respected professional. Below are some tips to help you maintain a professional social media presence.

**Tips for Maintaining a Professional Social Media Presence:**

- **Representing Your Organization on Your Personal Social Media Pages:**
  - If you state your employment with the organization on any social media page, you are no longer just representing yourself, but the organization as well.
    - You identify with the organization when you put your employment with them in your “about me” section, when you post or are tagged in photos displaying the organization’s names or logos, when you post about your work, or when you tag people who you work with in posts.
  - Ensure that your comments cannot be mistaken as opinions held by the organization.
    - If you are unsure, add a short disclaimer, such as “This post is my opinion and does not represent that of [the organization’s name].”
  - Content that unfairly shows the organization in a negative way may be grounds for serious disciplinary actions against you, so always assume that you represent the organization with your social media activity.
    - For example, if your organization promotes anti-violence, posting something that suggests domestic violence is okay will reflect poorly on you and on the organization.

- **Protecting Yourself, Your Organization, Co-Workers, and Participants:**
  - Before you post consider whether the content will: damage work relationships; hurt the organization’s credibility; expose confidential/sensitive information; get in the way of performing your duties; damage trusting relationships with participants; or violate the social media site’s rules.
    - Examples: negative comments about co-workers; tagging participants in posts; disrespecting members of the community and funders; or venting about participants, youth, or the community in general.
  - You should not post any comments, pictures, or videos that reveal the identities or locations of staff or participants without permission.
• For example, posting pictures of a violence interruption, of program participants, or where confidential activities take place is never allowed unless given permission by a supervisor or program manager and the participants.

• **Take Responsibility:**
  o If you believe any of your activity may hurt you, the organization, or participants, **delete it.** Mistakes happen. If you unknowingly publish false or harmful information, admit it, apologize, and correct it.
  ▪ Be aware that deleted material may still be accessible from the site’s servers.
  o Always exhibit good judgment when posting to a social media page.
    ▪ Use common sense: would the majority of people believe that your comments reflect the organization? Would most people interpret your comments as offensive?
    ▪ **Remember that your activity is public and can be saved, printed, and distributed to others, even without your permission or knowledge.**

**Things to Keep in Mind Before Posting on Social Media:**

• **Inappropriate posts may lead to consequences** for you, the organization, or participants. These posts may also violate the rules of the social media site, and may lead to deletion of your account. Always use your good judgment before posting.

• **If you are posting a picture or video,** look at what you or others are doing in the picture/video and decide if it could be viewed as inappropriate. Also, think about who is in the photo/video and if they want their image online.
  o Examples of inappropriate pictures/videos: any illegal activity; use of drugs or inappropriate alcohol use; racy photos; or pictures/videos of minors without their permission or permission from their parent or guardian.

• **Discuss important negative information in a way that supports positive community action.**
  o Explain why you are posting this content and be sure your message is clear. **Think about how you want the community to respond and what you need to do to facilitate this response.** What can you say to **motivate others to come together** in a way that **promotes peace** and the organization’s mission?
  o If posting any examples of violent behavior, make it very clear that you do not promote the violence in the picture/video and that you are only posting this content in order to raise awareness and action around the issue.
• With the picture/video you could include a statement such as:

"I am [posting or sharing] this content to show how widespread and normalized violence has become. This violent behavior is unacceptable and we must come together to create change within our community. Do NOT like this post or others like it. Come out and engage with anti-violence organizations working everyday to end violence or comment below with ideas and opportunities on how we can all work together to stop the violence."

• **Before posting a comment**, think – does it: promote violence; sound offensive; have unintended consequences (like fueling retaliation); disclose work activities; reflect negatively on your co-workers or organization; or involve a controversial opinion that might not reflect that of your organization.
  
  o **Examples of offensive comments:** anything discriminatory, racist, sexist, or that marginalizes a group of people; derogatory language/memes/gifs; ranting of any kind; taunts or calling out individuals; offensive videos; or anything you think may fuel an argument.

  o Understand that there may be consequences for you, the organization, or participants for posting negative comments about the organization, participants, local politicians or elected officials associated with the organization, funders, other organizations, the government, or partners without explanation or reasoning. Think about these consequences before you post.

• **Before “liking” any content**, think: are you sure you want to be affiliated with this cause or page?

• **Before “friending” someone or accepting a “follower”**, think: do I know this person? Can this person reflect badly upon me? Do I trust this person with my personal information? Can I trust this person to be responsible on my page?

  o If you are friends with anyone who may be involved in crime, put them on a special limited profile list, or think about unfriending/blocking them.

• Think about if posting certain information (**location or a criticism**) can risk your or others’ safety.
Social Media Privacy Tips

Social media is always updating and changing. It is important to maintain your privacy and to know how to adjust your settings when necessary. Here are some general tips to make sure you know where to find these settings and how to change them to keep your accounts private.

- Familiarize yourself with the site’s privacy settings in the site’s about section.  
  - Look up the differences between the mobile app and the main website:
    - Google search the questions.
    - Read comments about the apps.
    - Visit the site’s help section.
- Privacy settings can usually be found under your account settings and under the heading Privacy.
- Always update your settings when you hear about site updates, see changes in the site’s format, or update your mobile app.
- If you have a specific question, look up the answer online:
  - Use a search engine like Google or Bing; type in the question and focus on the search results that are from the social media site itself.

Privacy settings on smart phones:
- Every time you update your apps through iTunes or an app store, check your privacy settings.
- On Instagram, adjust your privacy settings by clicking on to get to your profile, and click Edit Profile and turn on Posts are Private.
- On Facebook, click on the more link next to your notifications link and scroll down to Privacy Shortcuts.
On Twitter, there is currently no way to adjust privacy through your phone. You must go through the website and click on Security and Privacy Settings and click Protect Tweets.

On Vine, go to your profile and click on Settings, then go to Your Content. You can now turn on the Posts are Private feature.

How to keep safe on social media:

- Never post your full birth date (people can find other information about you with your name and birth date).
- Never post contact information such as cell phone numbers or email.
- Do not use geo-tagging software to “check in.”
  - Especially if you are a victim of bullying, stalking, street violence, domestic violence, have been threatened, or feel unsafe.
  - Geo-tagging can make it easier for someone to find you.
- Familiarize yourself with how to Block People on your social media pages and what blocking means.
- Never share your password and change your password every few months.
- Do not friend or accept requests from people you do not know, trust, or like.
- Think before you post! Do not post anything that may make you a target for retaliation, hurts someone or puts others down.

What is public and what is private on Facebook:

- All of your profile pictures, status updates, and cover photos are automatically set as public on Facebook, however you can take steps to make this content private:
  - If you see a (globe) icon next to the date of a post, it means that it can be seen by the public and you should consider changing it.
    - Click on the (globe) icon, and choose a new icon from the drop-down list.
    - Below are all of the privacy setting icons you will see on Facebook:

```
Public
Friends
Only Me
Custom
```

- Every time you post/update your status, it is automatically public!
  - You need to click the globe icon to change it.
  - You can go through all pictures and albums and control who can see them by adjusting the icons.
  - You can also change what types of friends can see what you post! READ BELOW!
How to separate close friends from others and have control over what each sees:

- From a computer, on the news feed page, go to the column on the left side of the page and find Friends, then click on More.

- Use an Existing List – Facebook provides you with a number of automatic lists (close friends, acquaintances, family, etc.).
  - In your news feed, go to the column on the left side of the page and find Friends, click on a specific list to add people.
  - Find the “On This List” column on the right side of the page.
  - Type a friend’s name into the “+Add friends to this list” box to add them to the list.
  - Another way to add friends to an existing list is by going to your profile page and then to the Friends section, you can view all of your friends.
    - If they have a star next to their name, they are automatically put on the close friends list, and you get all their activity in your news feed.
    - If you want to place them in a different list, click on the Friends box next to their name and select the list you want to add them to from the dialogue box.

- Now that your Friends Lists are set up, you can edit who can see specific posts on your profile. You can do this for albums, photos, status updates, posts, and about me info.
  - On your profile page, look for any area that has one of the four icons (public, friends, only me, custom), and change it to the privacy setting you want.
• When you want to post a status, you can go down into the corner and specify the list of people you want to see it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What's on your mind?</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Social Media Privacy Tips" /></td>
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• You can also edit who can add/see things on your profile and who can tag you in posts:
  • Click the ▼ icon, then click Settings, next find Timeline and Tagging in the column on the left side of the page.
  • Then select edit next to the question you would like to change.
  • To add extra control to what is posted on your timeline and which posts you are tagged in, turn on the options to Review posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline and Review tags people add to your own posts before the tags appear on Facebook.
  • Or you can place Friends on the Restricted List which means they will only see your public profile, basically blocking them:
    • Click the ▼ icon, then click Settings, next find Blocking in the column on the left side of the page.
    • To the right of Restricted List click Edit List.

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<th>Restricted List</th>
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• Next click the On This List box and then click Friends

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<th>On This List</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="On This List" /></td>
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</table>

• Scroll down through our Friends or Search for friends by entering their name into the Search box.

• Click on the picture of the friend you want to put on the Restricted List (a ☑ icon will appear).

• When you are done click the Finish button.
**Social Media Timeline: Manhattan Crew Indictments**

The following timeline was developed using information found in a Manhattan District Attorney indictment. This indictment illustrates how social media was utilized to instigate retaliation and violence between multiple Manhattan crews. This specific example tracks how one young man was taunted, threatened and shot by rival crews over the course of a few weeks.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post/Incident:</strong></td>
<td>RIP (Name)</td>
<td>Niggas dnt want war we cud leave yu like john doe face first on the floor</td>
<td>Two people carrying a loaded .22 caliber semiautomatic pistol, and one individual pointed and fired the pistol at rival crew member taunted with RIP post on 12/1/4/10 and another person.</td>
<td>Time to catch head shots on that fat cheese cake mother fucker fuck tht free (Name) or die!!!! KKKKKKKKk off this</td>
<td>I love wen I got the grip and the (Crew Name) goons tell me bust tht shit and it start goin off like its july 4th</td>
<td>We gunna kill (Name) fat ass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of post:</strong></td>
<td>Direct threat to a living rival crew member.</td>
<td>Taunting the rival crew, stating that the rival crew doesn’t want a war because they will kill the rivals.</td>
<td>Encouraging fellow crew members to retaliate for the arrest of crew member.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>Continuing to taunt the same rival they shot at on 1/7/11</td>
<td>In the possession of a firearm, pointed it at rival threatened on 1/21/11 and tried to fire at him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Media Timeline: The Murder of Kierra’Onna Rice, Birmingham, Alabama

The following timeline was created using information from news articles and discussions from social media concerning the murder of Kierra’Onna Rice. Kierra’Onna, a 14-year-old girl, was shot and killed during a fight that was planned over Facebook after months of fighting online with a group of girls. This timeline illustrates how social media can be used to inflame events and spark potential situations of retaliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Feb 27, 2015</th>
<th>Feb. 28, 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Post / Shooting:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Ex-Girlfriend posts:</td>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Ex-Girlfriend posts:</td>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Ex-Girlfriend posts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kierra’Onna Rice shot in Birmingham, AL</td>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Boyfriend posts:</td>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Ex-Girlfriend posts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kierra’Onna’s Ex-Girlfriend posts:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of post / incident:</td>
<td>-Wages Tonight. #Party #RipPrincessKloe’</td>
<td>-All You Heard in The Fight Was Ra’shad Ass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kierra’Onna Rice was shot and killed after a group fight was organized in a park with the intention of filming it and putting it on social media. The girls involved had been fighting on Facebook. 2 boys shot in group and hit Kierra’onna.</td>
<td>Otp with Roderick while He at the Hospital We here for you girl I promise I hope u pull through</td>
<td>- Nawl Yall Li Hoes Don’t Need To Stay in the House Now Cause Kierra’onna Gone, Take Yall Li Hot Pussy And Outa Shape Ass Dicks On Back Out There. #If Yeen Listen Then Yeen Gone Listen Now Hoes. #RIPKeKe MY Baby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation of post:</td>
<td>Posted at 3:31 pm by before the organized fight between group of girls over Facebook (FB) argument.</td>
<td>Posted at 5:48 pm on day of organized fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null just got off the phone wit the detective and he said he gotta 17 year and 19 year old in custody and he said that witnesses say tony and jason shoot at the park but jason was on the 4 shooting dice nd tony had one bullet and he shot that hoe on the ground to break up the fight cause they tazed that girl but its cool doe cause my brothas foreva straight justice will be served free — with Block Boy Gmg Jason.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>News Articles</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kierra’Onna Friend 2 posts:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gmg Member 2 posts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>EVERYBODY GOT SO MUCH TO SAY</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kierra’Onna’s Friend 1 shares/posts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blockboy TOny and Block Boy</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kierra’Onna’s Friend 2 posts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>วก YUN SAVAGE WONT BE GONE FOR LONG!! EVERYBODY BETTER STAY PRAYED UP!!!</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kierra’Onna’s Friend 3 posts:</strong></td>
<td><strong>EVERYBODY WHO ON #BLOCKBOYTONY SIDE MIGHT AS WELL WRAP IT UP COS THIS GIRL DONT NEED FB FRIENDS...</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting his gang members, commenting that they are being threatened through social media.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting his gang members, commenting that they are being threatened through social media.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Photo is shaming offenders saying one is a snitch and the other is crying.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Photo is shaming offenders saying one is a snitch and the other is crying.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Threatening the offenders with violence.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Threatening the offenders with violence.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commenting on arrest and bail of shooters.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commenting on arrest and bail of shooters.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Refers to arguing on FB about shooting and them being blocked.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Refers to arguing on FB about shooting and them being blocked.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Threatening offenders and shaming anyone on their side. Threatens to shoot them up. Huge argument in comments.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Threatening offenders and shaming anyone on their side. Threatens to shoot them up. Huge argument in comments.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B.L.O.C.K.B.O.Y.T. O.N.Y gotta catch a murder case (Comment from friend tells Friend 3 to stay out of it.)</td>
<td>Shared Diss song against Antonio King on Facebook Page.</td>
<td>MY SON SAID MA UM STRAIGHT TRIPPIN ON THIS BS!! EVERYBODY TALKIN RECKLESS BOUT Blockboy TOny AND Block Boy Gmg Jason BUT THEY AIN TALKIN BOUT SHIT THEM STILL MY NIGGS AND THEY BETTER BE GLAD UM IN KILBY OR I WILL COME SEE BOUT THA ASS THEY ALREADY KNO ME!!! SHOTS FIRED!!! MESSAGE!!! MY BOY SUM SERIOUS AND HE ♫ ALWAYS HAVE BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE!!! #FREESAVAGE #FREEBLOCKBOYTONY #FREEBLOCKBOYJASON!!</td>
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</table>

<p>| Refers to diss song dissesing Get Money Gang and Block Boy Tony (Antonio King). | Diss song is disrespectful and can fuel retaliation. Commenters warn Friend 3 to stay out of it. | Threatening to shoot others who claim that Antonio King and Jason Wade are the shooters. “Free (name)” hashtags show support for those who have been detained/incarcerated. | Referring to diss song posted by Friend 3. Defending crew members saying lots of people were shooting. | A way to show support for other crew members, especially in light of diss song. | Says he knows he will be a victim of a shooting but wants to kill others like a gangster if that happens. | Threatening people to come get him. Large argument occurs in the comment section in which multiple people argue over the innocence of King and Wade. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Gmg Member 3 posts:</th>
<th>Gmg Member 4 posts:</th>
<th>Gmg Member 1 posts:</th>
<th>Kierra’onna Vigil</th>
<th>Trending Arrest of Kierra’Onna’s Cousin</th>
<th>TOB Member 1 posts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2, 2015</td>
<td>Antonio King (Arrested Shooter)</td>
<td>Changes profile picture to him and Antonio King with guns.</td>
<td>Nigga just shot at me while i was sitting on the porch 100 bet no pressure come back fuck nigga still sitting on the porch</td>
<td>Vigil held for Kierra’onna. News article noted that both offenders had been victims of shootings before.</td>
<td>#FreeNeisha trending on Kierra’onna’s boy friend’s page and a TOB member’s page.</td>
<td>Do U Wanna Be in Yo Future, I can Call Up My Shooter And Have Em Blow Like A Tube, Putcha 2 Rest Boy U’ll Be Laying Next to JoJo and Tooka #FreeDT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 3, 2015</td>
<td>I just heard that these two haven’t been home since the shooting 12 these da mf’s y’all suppose to be looking fa dummies #FreeMyBrothas — with Block Boy Gmg Jason.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 8, 2015</td>
<td>Posted picture of a boy and girl and stated that they were the real shooters.</td>
<td>Showing his support for Antonio King while also posting violent content with guns.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 10, 2015</td>
<td>Many people will delete their Facebook after an arrest.</td>
<td>Someone shot at gmg ceo while he was on his porch and taunts him to come back.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Lesson Plan: A Student’s Guide to Using Social Media Safely

Objective:
To have students identify harmful and violent social media content they witness, experience, and post. This lesson aims to provide students with action steps on how to handle such posts and avoid or resolve conflicts without causing harm to oneself or others. This issue is of great importance as this harmful content creates real-world conflicts and violence among youth. Further, law enforcement, employers, schools and colleges, among others, use social media to monitor youth and inform decisions, which can lead to arrest, being fired from a job, being suspended or expelled from school, and/or denied admission to college or a scholarship.

Introduction (3-5 minutes):
Introduce today’s topic of social media use and how it affects life both on- and off-line.

• For example – How many of you use social media? What do you generally use it for?

Have students identify positive and negative impacts of using social media.

• What are some of the pros and cons of using social media? What do you like about social media? What don’t you like? How do you feel about what happens on social media? How do things on social media impact your life offline?
  
  o NOTE: Teens report that social media has both positive and negative impacts on their lives. Positive examples include teens feeling better about themselves, increased sympathy for others, and increased self-confidence; however, negative outcomes include problems with parents, anxiety from posted content (i.e. pictures/videos), friendships ending, and face-to-face arguments.
  
  o If students have not brought up negative impacts such as fights, arrests, violence, etc. resulting from social media, ask them about these consequences.

  ▪ Youth use social media to express a range of behaviors and emotions. While some of these behaviors and experiences are common among the general teen population – face-to-face arguments, friendships ending, getting into trouble at school – high-risk youth also use social media to provoke physical violence. This behavior is exhibited in a variety of ways: posting orders of protection that identify complainants to intimidate informants; posting fight videos to shame rivals; posting surveillance photographs of rivals they intend to attack/shoot; instigating conflicts by posting photographs of themselves in front of a rival’s apartment building or “turf;” blatant posts discussing serious violent events; incoherent and emotional arguments between rivals; obvious promotion of gang activity; and incessant taunting of rivals. An on-going cycle of
violence is created as youth instigate, react, and retaliate to content posted on social media.

- Do you ever witness or experience people fighting online or posting something to make other people mad? Have you ever seen pictures/videos of teens with guns, drugs, or wads of money?
  - Follow up with asking them why they think this is happening. How do they feel when they witness or take part in this harmful behavior?
- Highlight behaviors that might influence the positive and negative outcomes.
  - How does someone’s behavior influence a negative/positive situation, give an example of provoking an argument or ignoring a nasty post, etc. For example, if someone comments “you’re ugly” on someone’s picture, that will most likely have a negative effect, where saying “you look nice” will have positive effects, and not saying anything will (most likely) have neutral outcomes. Ask students, what is a situation where not saying something would be positive or negative instead of neutral?

Harmful and Violent Social Media Posts (5-10 minutes):

Begin to delve deeper into the problem behaviors happening online – specifically violence, criminal activity (guns, fight videos, drugs, wads of cash, etc.), harassment, meanness, bullying, etc. – by giving students more information on today’s topic.

Ask students to identify what their biggest problems are on social media.

- If students don’t identify violence, criminal behavior (guns, assaults, threats, mobbing\(^1\), wads of cash, drugs, etc.), bullying as big problems, ask them why these are not problems and stress the serious harm these types of posts can bring to themselves, people they care about, and others.
  - For example: have you ever seen people post statuses referencing another person, either by name or not? Have you ever witnessed someone threaten or harass someone on social media? Has anyone “liked” or “shared” a fight video? How can this be harmful to you and others?

Inform students on how police, employers, schools, and colleges all use social media to monitor youth and inform decisions about their futures.

- Posting inappropriate content online can get you expelled, suspended, fired, hurt, killed, or arrested.

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this curriculum, “mobbing” is defined as when a group of youth is mobilized to a specific location and they travel together down a street, through a park, subway station, or store. Mobbing is a way for crews to promote their image by projecting their strength, size, toughness and power, and a means to intimidate others. Videos of youth mobbing often exhibit them engaging in criminal activities such as theft, vandalism, weapons possession, harassment, and assault, among others.
Social media activity is seen by everyone in a user’s network (and sometimes the entire public), allowing people to re-post/share posts, causing the posts to be seen by even more people.

- Police can very easily become aware of posts involving criminal activity, and have used social media as evidence against youth in prosecutions.

- **Deter youth from engaging in criminal activity both on- and off-line.**

- **Posting, liking, sharing, and commenting on criminal activity on social media can put youth at risk for violence, victimization, disciplinary action, and arrest, such as:**
  - Posting, sharing, liking or commenting on pictures/statues/videos/etc. that include guns, drugs, wads of cash, fights, threats, promoting violence, promoting a crew/gang, etc. This can link youth to criminal activity and can create consequences such as getting arrested, suspended, expelled, fired, or rejected from a job, school, or scholarship.

- Tell students they should not “friend” people or accept “followers” they do not know.

- When youth involved in criminal activity are arrested, often charges are increased due to social media activity. Social media activity has supported the prosecution of youth on felony charges including Conspiracy to Commit Murder, even if the youth was not present for the murder. As a result, youth can face long prison sentences (20+ years).
  - Examples of posts used in criminal prosecutions include: pictures with guns; discussing previous violent events (like shootings, robberies, fights); taunting and threatening rivals; discussing law enforcement activities; coordinating shootings, buying/selling/accessing guns; promoting a crew; associating with a crew by saying “Free XXX” if they have been arrested/incarcerated; music videos calling out rivals; and videos of criminal activity (fights, jumping turnstiles, robberies).

- Remind students that content posted online can live forever and that content is still accessible from the site’s servers after it is deleted by the user – meaning anyone with a court order can still obtain it. Therefore, students should always think about what they post before they post it and consider who in the future might be able to see or access it.

- **Employers** use social media as an informal background check – make sure your profile pictures are appropriate and none of your profile is public. If any content is public for some reason, make sure it is appropriate for anyone to see.

- Some **colleges and employers** request your social media usernames and passwords to be considered for admissions or hiring—this provides them access to look through all of the applicant’s social media history, messages and posts.
  - Some states have passed laws that make this practice illegal. A national law is currently being pushed (SNOPA), so keep up to date on the laws around this important issue.
  - Facebook has made sharing or soliciting a password a violation of its Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.
    - Inform students that they can tell a college or employer that they cannot share their password because it violates their user agreement with Facebook (or other social media site with the same policy). But note that the college or employer may not admit or hire them as a result of refusing to provide this information.
- **Scholarship providers** have denied applicants a scholarship because of what they posted on social media.
- Bullying, threats, and ranting about your school/classmates/teachers/bosses online can also lead to disciplinary actions such as suspensions, expulsions or being fired.

Once the harmful topics are identified by students (or instructor), *get students to define these terms and provide examples of what this looks like to them.*

- For example, harm and violence on social media could be something that hurts someone’s feelings, makes them feel in danger, or promotes criminal activity (shootings, violence, assaults, guns, drugs, rape, etc.).
  - Examples may be purposely provoking someone online, posting something nasty about someone, picking on someone repeatedly, making fake accounts to stalk/harass someone, posting about criminal intentions (i.e., mobbing, killing someone, threats), photos or videos of fights or weapons, drinking or using drugs alone, etc.
- Follow up on the problem behaviors listed above by asking students how they currently handle these situations – ignore, confront, post/reply, “like”, tell friends, tell adults, etc.

**Dealing with Harmful and Violent Social Media Posts (15-20 minutes):**

Ask students *how they decide what to do when they see a harmful post.*

- **How do you know whether a post is serious or not?** For example, we have all seen people post things that are not serious, but how do we know? Ask students for an example of this.
- Advise students that they can *assess what is written.** Depending on their relationship with the person posting and how serious they believe the person to be, they should take action. For example, if it is a direct threat, and you feel the person will act on it, what can you do? Let students define high, medium, and low-risk posts – *For example:***

**High-Risk:** Content that promotes easy access to weapons (pictures posing with guns, selling guns, posts about being armed with a weapon); life threatening; dangerous; threats; previous assaults (these often trigger retaliation); about a crime that is about to happen; or violent content of someone you know that becomes viral (shared videos of fights/humiliating pranks/shaming/bullying/memes/gifs).

**Medium-Risk:** Likely to cause a serious argument, but no one is in physical danger yet; current court cases/arrests; drugs; cash; mobbing; recruiting people for a fight; or drinking and drug use (especially if the teen is alone).

**Low-Risk:** Mean/offensive general remarks; attention-seeking; or promoting crews or groups.

**NOTE:** Be aware *that a situation can go through all of these risk levels.* For example, what started off as medium-risk can easily become a high-risk situation.
• Ask students how they can track the progression of such posts. This can help them identify if a post is escalating or deescalating.
  o Escalating posts include those that are shared/reposted by others, involve arguments in comments sections, or become more serious in threats and intent (can include thoughts of suicide, threatening harm to another person, threatening to commit a crime).
  o Deescalating posts include those that have stopped getting attention, are deleted, someone in a position to help is intervening/ has been notified already, the person is no longer engaging/responding, or the person is ignoring comments.

Direct students to come up with action steps for each of the risk levels (and any other situation-specific response that appears necessary from the conversation with students). Prompt them for action steps by asking:
  • When your friends are having an argument in-person, what do you do to calm them down?
  • Do you think this approach would be different online? How is it different? How does this change your approach?
  • If you see something harmful on social media, is it okay to intervene if done safely? What would this look like? Reinforce that students should always make sure they are not putting themselves in danger by intervening.

Examples of Possible Action Steps:

ADVICE: The best ways to resolve a conflict is to be an active listener, calm down their anger, make sure they realize the possible consequences of their actions before retaliating, and getting them to walk in the other person’s shoes.

High-Risk:
  • Inform a trusted adult, community member, anti-violence organization, or the police.
  • If a student thinks a shooting or other serious violent crime is about to happen, the adult or youth should tell the police and/or a local anti-violence organization so they can stop the shooting/crime
    o Tell the story about Iquan Williams – his brother saw a post stating that someone was going to shoot up the party Iquan was attending. His mother told him to come home, he told her he was on his way, but a shooting happened at the party before he left and he was killed. If someone had told the right people (the police or an anti-violence organization), about the shooter’s posts Iquan would probably still be alive. – What are other stories like this?
  • Tell other people that might be near or going to the location of the shooting/crime so they can avoid the area.
  • Flag/report the post so the site can take it down; take a screen shot of the post to share it with a trusted adult.
Medium-Risk:

- If the person posting is a friend, try to **talk with them privately** and see how you could help calm them down. If you feel that this is appropriate, use the following tactics:
  - Reducing Anger:
    - **Promote other activities**: Going for a walk/run; listening to music; reading a magazine; etc.
    - **Reframing the situation**: Are you sure the other person meant to hurt you? What if that post wasn’t about you?
    - **Distract them**: Refer them to funny sites; tell a funny story; look at pictures; etc.
    - Do not get them riled up by replaying the event over and over again.
    - **Outline potential consequences**: Ask them what their goals are (either for life, or for next week, or even tomorrow) and explain how responding can impact these goals.
      - Show them that getting in a fight online/harmful posts can mess up their plans.
  - Empathy:
    - Make sure they **recognize how the other person is feeling**.
    - Ask them how might what you say hurt others? How would you feel if that was said to you? *How would you feel if that was said to your brother/sister/cousin?*
  - Self-Control:
    - Help your friends **identify the stress points in their body** – for example, when they get mad, where is their tension (hands, jaw, back, shoulders, legs, etc.)?
      - Do they get sweaty? Do they pace? Does their heart begin to beat faster? Etc.
      - This will help students **recognize their anger at earlier stages**.
- Inform a trusted adult or community member if you think the problem is escalating.
- If the person getting picked on is a friend or someone you know, **reach out to them and let them know you support them and are there to listen**.
- If someone is posting about criminal activity, remind your friends that social media is monitored by police, employers, schools, etc.
- If people are fighting online, think if there is a way to **deescalate the argument without putting yourself at risk** – maybe you can post a picture from when you were all friends, talk with them offline about what’s going on, or tell someone that can help mediate the conflict (anti-violence organizations, school counselors, teachers, etc.) - see above examples of high-risk action steps
- If you notice a friend is **using drugs or alcohol a lot or alone**, try to let them know you are worried about their use and see if they would be open to talking to someone about it (local community based organization, school counselor, etc.).
- Flag/report the post so the site can take it down.
- Take a screen shot of the post to share with a trusted adult.
Low-Risk:
- *Monitor the post* to make sure no one will get hurt.
- If you are worried about this person, offer to talk or hang out to give support.

Activity (5 minutes):
- **Discuss or hand out an example** of a harmful post to each student. Read through the scenario together.
  - Is this a high, medium, or low-risk situation? Why?
  - What would you do if you saw this post, but it wasn’t about you?
  - What would you do if someone posted this about you?
--OR--
- **Role play** a scenario where a student saw a harmful post the night before, and provides advice in-person the next day at school.
  - Let students create the scenario by allowing them to decide what the post said and how they want to handle it the next day, etc.

**Final Thoughts: Always be responsible on social media:**
- What you post impacts yourself, people you care about and others.
- Employers, colleges, scholarship providers, schools, and the police can monitor your online activity, including private messages.
- Content can still be accessed from the site’s servers after it is deleted by the user.
- Always think before you post, and report harmful posts appropriately.
- Take screen shots or find another way to record/document the post in order to show it to a trusted person who can help intervene.
News Examples

TEEN FACES JAIL FOR ALLEGEDLY UPLOADING PHOTO OF HIMSELF SIMULATING ORAL SEX WITH STATUE OF JESUS

New York Daily News: September 12, 2014

A Pennsylvania teen is facing two years behind bars after he simulated oral sex with a statue of Jesus and uploaded pictures of his unholy deed online. The images were then uploaded to Facebook, where they soon went viral.

Cops were contacted and the teen was arrested and charged on Tuesday with desecrating a venerated object.

‘IT WAS A BONEHEAD DECISION’: FLORIDA DAD REGRETS KICKING 6 YEAR-OLD SON DOWN SKATEBOARD RAMP

New York Daily News: May 19, 2014

Marcus Crossland said his attempt to help his son, Dino, confront his fear was a mistake and has since lost his job because of the incident, which was recorded and posted online last month. He and his wife, Emily White, said they plan to move away from their neighborhood because of the backlash.

But Marcus Crossland said the tough love experiment on his son, Dino, backfired when a clip of the shocking ordeal at the Jacksonville skate park was posted to Instagram on April 26. “You can be the most amazing, kind-hearted, giving person in the world,” she said. “All it takes is that 2 seconds and people will hate you.” “Now those 3 seconds of video footage didn’t necessarily really affect us. The repercussions have.”

6 ARRESTED IN VANDALISM OF FORMER NFL PLAYER’S UPSTATE NEW YORK HOME, WITH MORE BUSTS TO COME, COPS SAY

New York Daily News: September 27, 2013

Brian Holloway, former offensive lineman for the New England Patriots, said Thursday that he authorized the sheriff to charge the young partygoers who are accused of trashing his home during a party Labor Day weekend. Holloway, gained national attention by reposting party pictures the teens had put on social media websites.

Three of the other arrested people face felony charges including burglary and larceny, and two are charged with misdemeanors, including trespassing. They range in age from 17 to 21.

FACEBOOK PASSWORDS OF APPLICANTS DEMANDED BY COLLEGES, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Huffington Post: March 6, 2012

MSNBC reports that some government agencies and colleges are now requiring applicants to give them their Facebook passwords so that they can see what’s behind the privacy wall.

The story comes on the same day the San Francisco Chronicle reports that some scholarship providers are using social networks to help decide which candidates to select.

Additionally, the survey found that information on applicants’ Facebook accounts have led "about one-third" to have been denied a scholarship, while one quarter have been granted a scholarship based on the findings.
QUEENS MAN CONVICTED OF ATTEMPTED MURDER FOLLOWING “FACEBOOK” ARGUMENT

The Forum News Group: March 14, 2014

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a 22-year-old St. Albans man has been convicted of the December 2011 attempted murder of a 21-year-old Queens man who he had been arguing with on-line over Facebook postings made by a mutual female friend.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendant has been convicted of a violent and senseless assault, which caused the victim to lose his leg and almost his life. The attack was apparently instigated by comments made during a conversation that the two individuals had on the social networking site Facebook. Instead of just shutting off his computer and forgetting about the argument, the defendant chose to get a gun and confront the victim in person at his residence.”

District Attorney Brown said that, according to trial testimony, they had an argument on Facebook with at approximately 11:30 a.m. on December 27, 2011, during which the victim provided his address to the man, who soon after appeared at his residence.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY VANCE AND POLICE COMMISSIONER BRATTON ANNOUNCE LARGEST INDICTED GANG CASE IN NYC HISTORY

103 Members Charged in 2 Indictments; Top Count is Conspiracy in the First Degree, a Class A-I Felony

Manhattan District Attorney’s Office: June 04, 2014

To build a case this extensive, prosecutors and investigators analyzed more than 40,000 calls from correctional facilities, screened hundreds of hours of surveillance video, and reviewed more than a million social media pages.

As detailed in the indictments, the defendants used hundreds of Facebook posts and direct messages, cell phone videos, and calls made from Rikers Correctional Facility to plot the deaths of rival gang members. Gang members also used social media to publicize and claim credit for acts of violence and publically disrespect and denigrate rival gang members.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY VANCE AND POLICE COMMISSIONER KELLY ANNOUNCE INDICTMENTS OF 63 MEMBERS OF THREE OF MANHATTAN’S MOST VIOLENT GANGS

Manhattan District Attorney’s Office: April 04, 2013

Social media remains a double-edged sword in our crime fighting strategies. It is used by crew members to brag about past crimes, taunt rivals, and incite violence. On the other hand, we use social media to document past crimes and intercept new ones being talked about openly by crew members on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.”

As detailed in the indictments, the defendants used hundreds of Facebook and Twitter posts and direct messages, text messages, cell phone videos, and calls made from Rikers Correctional Facility to plot the deaths of rival gang members. Gang members also used social media and prison phone calls to traffic firearms and ammunition, and to warn each other of potential law enforcement action.
Harmful Posts Exercise

Instructions: This exercise includes four scenarios of harmful social media behavior. Read through each scenario and write in the space provided the risk level of the post, why it is at this risk level and an action plan to help deescalate the situation. Take time to think about what may escalate or deescalate this situation and how your action plan might change.

Scenario 1: You notice a video of a fight on Facebook where multiple people attacked one person. People in the video are laughing and cheering as the other person is getting hurt. You also realize that the video has over 150 likes, has been shared 90 times, and the names of the people fighting have been tagged by other users in the comments section.

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Scenario 2: You heard from your friends that two people you know are fighting a lot lately, which surprises you because you thought they were best friends. Later that day, you notice that one of them has posted a status that says, “Going out with my true friends this weekend! The ones that aren’t fake, unlike some people I know…” You notice that no one is explicitly named, but because you know about your friend’s drama, you have a good idea of who she is talking about.

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Scenario 3: You are surfing Twitter and you notice that one of your friends tweeted, “I feel so depressed and down. I don’t know what to do. Sometimes I feel like killing myself”. You also noticed some pictures of your friend drinking by himself.

Scenario 4: You see a photo on Instagram of your friend holding a handgun in his home. In fact, his Instagram has a lot of photos of him and his friends playing and posing with guns.
Harmful Posts Exercise: Discussion Leader Version

Instructions: This exercise includes four scenarios of harmful social media behavior. Read through each scenario, and write in the space provided the risk level of the post, why it is at this risk level and an action plan to help deescalate the situation. Take time to think about what may escalate or deescalate this situation and how your action plan might change.

Scenario 1: You notice a video of a fight on Facebook where multiple people attacked one person. People in the video are laughing and cheering as the other person is getting hurt. You also realize that the video has over 150 likes, has been shared 90 times, and the names of the people fighting have been tagged by other users in the comments section.

Risk Level: High: The people fighting have been tagged in the video, including the victim, so now everyone knows who is getting beat up and who is committing violence. This makes it more likely that retaliation will occur. Since a large amount of people have seen the video, the victim may feel publicly humiliated, shamed, and embarrassed, making it more likely they will be vulnerable to more violence or thoughts of revenge.

What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate? An example of escalation would be comments shaming the victim, whereas a de-escalation would be if the video was taken down.

What can you do? Flag the video. It is a violation of Facebook’s terms of service and should get taken down. If you know any of the people in the video, reach out to them and try and make sure no one is planning to retaliate. Remind them to walk in the other person’s shoes (Note: only do this if you feel safe to do so). Try and reach out to the victim and calm him/her down and let them know that you support him/her. Take a screenshot of the video and tell someone you trust that can intervene.

Scenario 2: You heard from your friends that two people you know are fighting a lot lately, which surprises you because you thought they were best friends. Later that day, you notice that one of them has posted a status that says, “Going out with my true friends this weekend! The ones that aren’t fake, unlike some people I know…” You notice that no one is explicitly named, but because you know about your friend’s drama, you have a good idea of who she is talking about.

Risk Level: Low: No one has been threatened or even named. While it is obvious to people who know these two friends are fighting who this post is about, it is not outright shaming anyone by name. Therefore, people that don’t know the drama still do not know about it. This post is mean and hurtful, but no one is in immediate danger to retaliate or harm themselves or others.

What could happen that would make this escalate? An example of escalation would be arguing comments back and forth on the post.

What can you do? Use empathy to get both friends to walk in the other’s shoes. Send a picture of them when they were friends to remind them what they are sacrificing by fighting. Offer support to both parties and try to get them to understand that posting a status like this hurts the other person’s feelings.
Scenario 3: You are surfing Twitter and you notice that one of your friends tweeted, “I feel so depressed and down. I don’t know what to do. Sometimes I feel like killing myself”. You also noticed some pictures of your friend drinking by himself.

Risk Level: Medium: The fact that he is drinking by himself may show he is having a hard time dealing with his feelings of depression or sadness. Everyone feels down from time-to-time, but stating a want to commit suicide should always be a red flag. Since the friend has not stated anything specific in how or when he wants to commit suicide, this risk is not yet high, but should be monitored.

What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate? An example of an escalation would be a farewell letter posted online, de-escalation would be him not posting depressed/sad posts in a while.

What can you do? You should support him. Give him a call/message him and tell him that he means a lot to you and that you are always there to listen if he needs to talk. Let him know you are worried about him. If you do not know him that well, find someone who does. Talk to a school counselor so that they can reach out. You can also send him a link to a website for help or a link to a funny video to try and cheer him up.

Scenario 4: You see a photo on Instagram of your friend holding a handgun in his home. In fact, his Instagram has a lot of photos of him and his friends playing and posing with guns.

Risk Level: Medium: Having a gun could be illegal depending on where you live. Having pictures with guns outside of normal gun activities (i.e. gun range, hunting, trap shooting) may be threatening. Having access to a gun and other weapons may increase the chances that violence may occur, either on accident or on purpose. In addition, police monitor social media frequently.

What could happen that would make this escalate or deescalate? An example of escalation would be noticing that he is using Facebook to threaten classmates or talking about how he has a gun and is going to be in front of the school in a few minutes. De-escalation of posts with weapons is often difficult because the weapon poses real world consequences, even if unintentional. However gun use can be low risk if in a safe context such as a shooting range; however this can still pose a threat of violence as people are human and make mistakes such as Dick Cheney shooting his hunting partner in the face or the 9 year old who shot and killed a firearm instructor with an Uzi.

What can you do? Remind your friend that law enforcement and future employers monitor social media. This could lead to serious consequences such as arrest, loss of job, or rejection of applications. Tell your friend that they should take those photos off of Instagram and other social media sites. Tell a trusted adult or anti-violence organization about the weapons your friend has in order to protect them from any danger.
Empathy is the ability to experience the emotions and perspective of another person, while still recognizing that these feelings do not originate from you.

Why is empathy important?
- Empathy allows you to understand why others feel and act a certain way.
- Empathy allows you to feel more connected to others.
- People who are good at empathizing have better social skills and psychological development.
- High levels of empathy are associated with lower levels of aggression.
  - Those who can understand how their actions affect others are less likely to be aggressive.

Emotional Intelligence:
A main component of empathy is the ability to recognize different emotions in others, to understand the importance of emotions, and to experience emotions with others.
- Help the youth to identify the different emotions they feel and discuss why they are both good and bad.
- Encourage the youth to keep track of how their mood changes and what events lead to those changes.
- Encourage youth to identify different emotions in others through their body language.

Perspective Taking:
Empathy also involves the ability to take the perspective of the other person and understand how it might feel to walk in their shoes.
- Remind the participant to be empathic through targeted questioning:
  - How would you feel if someone said or did this to you?
  - What if this happened to your friend/brother/sister?
  - How would you respond to this? What emotions are they probably feeling right now?
  - How would you feel if your sister/daughter/brother/cousin were talked about this way?
- Find ways to show how the youth and the person they are arguing with are similar or different.

Using Empathy to Prevent Social Media Violence:
- Sometimes, the internet gives youth a false sense of anonymity, which may lead them to respond more aggressively and impulsively than they normally would in person.
- Remind youth that their words and behavior can hurt others.
- Remind youth that pictures with guns may lead to more feelings of anger and fear in others that can place them and their friends and family in danger.
- Promote empathic and emotional expression online by “liking” positive posts and offering support.
- Engage youth in a private message to help mediate arguments:
  - Problem solve the other person’s perspective.
  - Focus on the different emotions the youth and the other person are feeling.
  - Reduce feelings of anger.
  - Talk about goals and how responding aggressively can hurt those goals.
Example: If you see a taunting post or argument through social media, like the provided example, use the below suggestions as possible ways to respond.

- Send a private message to Desean (blue text) and try to engage him in a conversation. Try to ask questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Here are some examples:
  - I see that Matt (Purple icon) really upset you today. How are you feeling now?
  - Saying those things to Matt could put you in danger. How are you staying safe?
  - That Matt seemed really mean, why did you post that conversation online?
  - Why did Matt say those horrible things?
  - How did this fight start?
- Once you get Desean engaged in conversation, ask questions that promote empathy
  - How would you feel if someone disrespected your family? What about someone you lost and were close to?
- How do you think Matt feels that you posted this online?
  - How do you think he will react?
  - What do you think he is feeling?
- How might this fight hurt your family and friends?
- How would you feel if someone called you a “faggy,” “pussy,” “soft ass nigga”, told you to “suck their dick”, or disrespected your dead family members (“dead fam”)? If someone called your friend a “faggy,” “pussy,” “soft ass nigga”, told them to “suck their dick”, or disrespected their dead family members (“dead fam”)?
- Did you know that Matt’s best friend got in a fight yesterday and got really hurt? Maybe that is why he is so angry? How might you feel if you found out your best friend was hurt like that?

  Problem solve how to respond next time
  - This Matt does not seem very nice, why are you friends with him at all?
  - I see you tried to get Matt to stop talking to you, have you thought of blocking him?
  - How might you calm yourself down next time someone provokes you like this?
  - What can you do now to stop the violence?
    - Block Matt?
    - Delete the post?
    - Offer to help mediate an in person or online conversation between them.
Grief How-to-Guide

Facts about grief:
1. Grief is a normal reaction to the loss of a loved one.
2. Grieving has no set time limit.
3. Everyone grieves differently.
4. Teens tend experience conflicting emotions and rarely have a set pattern of grieving.

There are 5 stages of grief that we all go through: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Everyone goes through these stages in different orders and for different lengths of time. As we respond to the world around us, we go back and forth between these stages within minutes, hours, or days.

Denial
This stage allows us get through each day and carry on with life as usual. After a loss we go into shock or denial, which helps us to slow down the emotions rather than become overwhelmed by the loss. Sometimes in this stage we feel alone, numb, unable to cry, like we can’t go on, or that life is meaningless and makes little sense. However, denial allows us to cope and take action to complete tasks associated with the loss, such as planning a funeral.

Anger
Anger is usually the first layer of emotion people feel after a loss. We can be angry at anyone, including ourselves, God, or the deceased. Usually there is pain and other feelings under the anger, like abandonment or powerlessness, but we are most familiar with expressing anger. Being angry can help start the process of releasing emotion around the loss or act as a way to continue a connection to our loved one.

Bargaining
Bargaining is a stage where we replay what we could have, or should have, done differently to save our loved one’s life. This usually includes “What if…” and “If only…” statements. Sometimes this involves bargaining with the pain – “please God, if I go to church everyday will you make the pain go away, will you bring back my husband.” During this time it is common to feel guilty about the loss, even if you know logically that there was nothing you could do. We want life to go back to the way it was and are searching for anything to make that happen.

Depression
Depression is a healthy response to loss; it would be odd if we didn’t get depressed after a loved one passes away. When the loss becomes a reality, we feel deep emptiness that may cause us to withdraw or have intense feelings of sadness and despair, such as feeling like there is no reason to go on. Although depression is common, this does not necessarily mean that crying is the only response. Feeling a lack of interest in previous activities you enjoyed, numbness, excessive fatigue, loss of appetite, and feeling negative about the world around you are also symptoms of depression.
Acceptance
Acceptance is about recognizing the new normal of life without your loved one. It does not mean we are ok with what happened or that we have moved on, but that this new reality exists. Sometimes we try to keep things the same as a way to keep our loved one alive in spirit; however a time will come when we have to readjust. This usually means filling that person’s role with yourself, someone else, or developing new routines around their absence. We might feel like we are betraying our loved one when we do this, but we must make meaningful relationships, listen to how we feel, fulfill our needs, and continue to live life.

When grief can become “complicated”:

Losing a loved one is always difficult, but sometimes other factors associated with the death can make this process more difficult.

1. Losing someone due to homicide or a traumatic accident can include traumatic stress symptoms, such as:
   a. Nightmares, anxiety, invasive thoughts of the events, fear, guilt, shame, and helplessness.
2. Involvement with the police and courts can create added stress that delays the grieving process, making it more difficult to overcome.
3. Media surrounding death may also add stress and feelings of invasion.
   a. Leaving no privacy to grieve.
4. Victim blaming, such as number arrests, from media or others can create shame and anger, and hurt the coping process.

Symptoms of complicated grief:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Reactions</th>
<th>continued sleeping problems, nightmares, and intrusive memories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactions</td>
<td>prolonged aggression or hostility, panic attacks, phobias, irrational fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Reactions</td>
<td>isolation, withdrawal from social contact, self-destructive behavior, continued loss of interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recognizing healthy and problematic grieving:

Pay close attention to the posts and behaviors of your participant after they have recently lost someone. Turning to social media to grieve is not a bad thing, but it is important to monitor who may be having a tougher time. Below is a table that outlines a few common behaviors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Problematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Rest in Peace” comments on social media</td>
<td>Social media posts describing loneliness or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feeling “lost” without the other person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial pages/videos on social media</td>
<td>Posting about revenge on memorial pages/video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sad, angry, and confused</td>
<td>Placing blame for death on other people, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>communicating desires to act out revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using social media to connect with others</td>
<td>Using social media to cling to the lost person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the deceased. Posting to RIP pages to</td>
<td>or continued venting about the loss, such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remember good times, “we miss you”</td>
<td>excessive, daily posts, “can’t live without you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments that the deceased has reached</td>
<td>Comments that the deceased is not really dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaven or peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserting that you will overcome the loss</td>
<td>Feeling that you cannot live without the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering the good times with the deceased,</td>
<td>Constantly dwelling in the past and being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>especially on holidays, anniversaries,</td>
<td>unable to let go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birthdays, and other special occasions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking directly to the deceased through</td>
<td>Talking directly to the deceased through their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their social media page</td>
<td>social media page every single day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and</td>
<td>Suicidal or homicidal thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abandonment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to manage grief:

In order to help those experiencing problematic grief to heal, it is important to guide them through the 5 steps at their own pace. Pay close attention to those who have experienced a traumatic loss.

1. Establish meaning and personal significance:
   a. Use the participant’s religious beliefs to help accept the meaning of loss.
   b. Try to work through feelings of suddenness and unfairness by communicating that no one is ever really ready for the loss of a close friend/family member.
   c. Stress that the deceased is loved and no longer in any pain.
   d. Try and talk the youth out of blaming self, others, or victim for death.
   e. Correct problematic thinking that “you are only somebody when you die”.
   f. Confront fears about death.
2. Confront reality and respond to the loss:
   a. Help organize memorial activities to help make the death real.
   b. Find a safe space to be alone and cry or express your grief in your own way (no violence!).
   c. Provide information on how to get in touch with mental health care workers and school social workers.
   d. Provide emotional support for friends and family when dealing with media, police, funeral arraignments, or other stressors.
e. Help move youth through denial by allowing them to make new daily routines that no longer involve the deceased.

3. Sustain close relationships and support network:
   a. Prevent the youth from isolation by helping them get together with friends in a supportive way.
   b. Pay attention to substance use and withdrawing behavior from activities, and try to get the youth re-involved in the community.
   c. Reframe venting and talks of revenge using anger management and empathy techniques to stop potential incidences of violence.
   d. Organize community events to bring people together.

4. Maintain emotional balance:
   a. Use self-control training to ensure that your participant is emotionally balanced.
   b. Remind youth that it is ok to feel many different/opposite emotions at the same time, and help them define them.
   c. Pay close attention to feelings of guilt, shame, abandonment, and anger.
   d. Remind youth to respond empathically to others and not to be afraid to express themselves (recommend journaling and other private emotional activities).

5. Preserve self-image:
   a. Throughout the process, remind the youth that they are capable and strong enough to get through their grief.
   b. Remind youth that grief is a long process with no correct end time.
   c. Promote resilience by communicating how they have grown through this process and stressing the new coping skills they have learned.