Self-image & identity: what is it?

As described in the UKCCIS 'Education for a Connected World' framework, this unit "explores the differences between online and offline identity beginning with self-awareness, shaping online identities and how media impacts on gender and stereotypes. It identifies effective routes for reporting and support and explores the impact of online technologies on self-image and behaviour."

Introduction to the unit

Students will understand what is meant by the term 'self image, identity and body image' and the role they play online. They will be able to explain why people experiment and edit their image online and provide reasons for why they might wish to do this. They will be able to analyse images and make positive comments on others' self-identity.

Key learning outcomes

✓ To be able to describe why online content can influence a person's behaviour and body image.
✓ To be able to assess and challenge social pressures and the way I present myself online.
✓ To be able to challenge negative comments towards my own or another's self identity online.
✓ To be able to make positive contributions to other's self-identity.

Key words

- Identity
- Body image
- Media
- Social platforms
- Stereotypes
- Edited images
- Artificial intelligence
- Self-esteem

Resources

- Weblinks to articles and videos included within activities
- Activity 2 – Celebrity 'before and after' images worksheet

Challenge for more able pupils:

Activity 2 - Ask pupils to work in groups to create an online campaign for a well-known brand that promotes positive self-esteem and body image and challenges negative perceptions of beauty.

Learning style predominance of pupils:
(This space is left blank for the teacher to fill in)

SEN provision:
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Learning style:
Discussion, research and written tasks

Approximate time altogether:
1hr 20minutes

Self-image & identity

Key learning objectives:
To be able to...
- ✓ Identify key parts of my own identity, including online.
- ✓ Prioritise parts of my identity, including online.

Key learning outcomes:
Students will be able to identify, order and prioritise aspects of their identity, including the role their online identity plays. They will be able to reflect upon what is most important to them and why. Students will learn the importance of respecting others' opinions.

Key questions:
- How does digital media and technology play a role in their identity?
- How does digital media positively impact their identity and experiences?
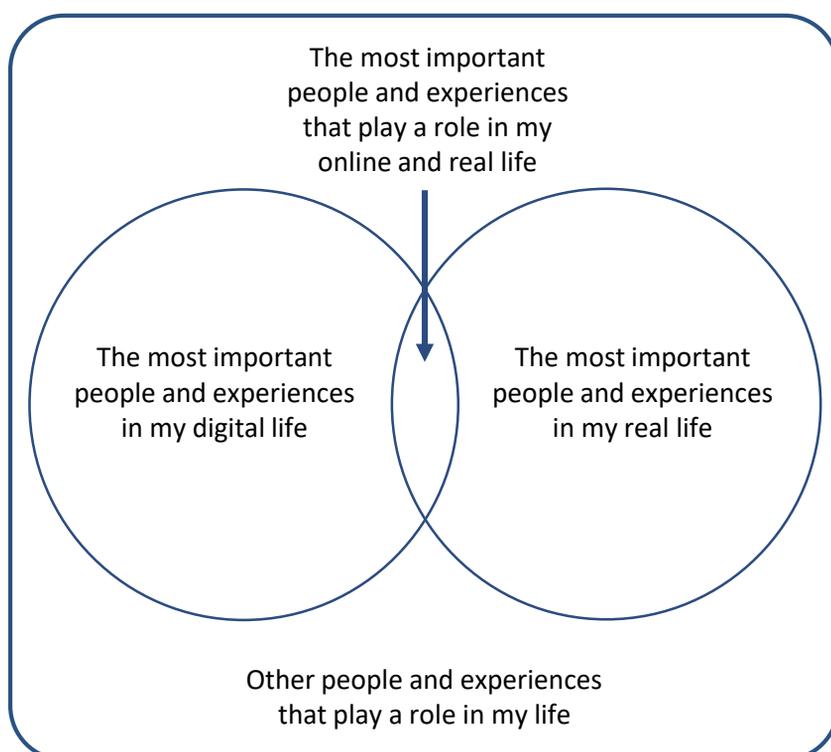- How does digital media negatively impact their identity and experiences?

Time taken:
10 minutes

Activity 1

What is your self-image?

Starter question: 'What is your self-image and identity?'

Individually, ask students to define what is meant by the term 'self-image and identity' and explain how they might portray a different identity online. Ask students to share their thoughts with a partner. Nominate pupils to feedback their answers to the class.

Students to create an 'identity circle' following the format depicted below. Students must describe all the things that are important to them about their identity, including online, and place them in their identity circle. Ask pupils to reflect on their identity circle and answer the following questions:
- How does digital media and technology play a role in their identity?
- How does digital media positively impact their identity and experiences?
- How does digital media negatively impact their identity and experiences?

The most important people and experiences that play a role in my online and real life

The most important people and experiences in my digital life

The most important people and experiences in my real life

Other people and experiences that play a role in my life

Self-image & identity

Key learning objectives:
To be able to…
- ✓ Explain how content online can influence the way I behave and evaluate how/why.
- ✓ Describe how online content can be altered/shaped to influence behaviour and body image.
- ✓ Give examples of media that aim to influence behaviour.
- ✓ Demonstrate ways I can use the internet for positive self-promotion.

Key learning outcomes:
Pupils will be able to identify why content online and in the media is edited and provide their own opinion on this. Pupils will be able to give examples in the media of online content that aims to positively impact behaviour and negatively impact behaviour.

Key questions:
- What is the purpose of editing photographs?
- What can you do to challenge negative ideas on body image?

Time taken:
20 minutes

Activity 2

Influencing behaviour and attitudes

Teacher resource provided: 'Celebrity Images' worksheet
Pupils to work in groups of 3-4. Show the images of the celebrities before and after photographs that have been edited for the media. In their groups, ask pupils to discuss and annotate the changes between the before and after photographs.

Reflection questions
- Why have the images been edited?
- What is the media and it's purpose?
- What are your opinions of these edited images?
- How can these photographs negatively impact a person's mental health?
- Other than in advertising, where else might you see edited photographs? (Social media)
- Have you ever used tools to edit photographs? If yes, how and why?
- How can you challenge these perceptions of beauty?

In groups, ask pupils to think of a list of brands that they know and buy into that may portray unrealistic or unhealthy perceptions of self-image and a second list of brands that challenge perceptions of beauty. Ask groups to feedback their ideas to the class. Show pupils the brand campaigns below that aim to challenge perceptions of gender and body image.

- Billie Eilish Speaks Her Truth in #MyCalvins
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeMmUglv6wA
- Dove #MyBeautyMySay advertising campaign
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqToVzu0iTc
- Always #LikeAGirl advertising campaign
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs
- Go Play Face + Body advertising campaign
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCi7y4U4eO8

Reflection questions
- What is the purpose of each of these campaigns?
- How do they make you feel?
- What are the positive connotations?
- Is there any negative connotations?
- Is there an imbalance of female and male images in the media?

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Activity 2 continued

Key learning objectives:
To be able to…
- ✓ Explain how content online can influence the way I behave and evaluate how/why.
- ✓ Describe how online content can be altered/shaped to influence behaviour and body image.
- ✓ Give examples of media that aim to influence behaviour.
- ✓ Demonstrate ways I can use the internet for positive self-promotion.

Key learning outcomes:
Pupils will be able to identify why content online and in the media is edited and provide their own opinion on this. Pupils will be able to give examples in the media of online content that aims to positively impact behaviour and negatively impact behaviour.

Key questions:
- What is the purpose of editing photographs?
- What can you do to challenge negative ideas on body image?

Influencing behaviour and attitudes

For the final part of the activity, ask pupils to work alone to research campaigns OR people that use social media to enforce positive perceptions of self-image and body image for everyone. They must create a paragraph explaining the role that the (online) media plays in regards to a young person's mental health and the importance of challenging negative or unrealistic perceptions of beauty.

Time taken:
20 minutes

Self-image & identity

Key learning objectives:
To be able to...
✓ Recognise, assess and challenge social pressures and expectations that influence how I present myself online, such as the pictures I share.

Key learning outcomes:
Pupils will be able to reflect on their own use of social media and how they are influenced to act/behave in a particular way online to comply with social expectations. Pupils will be able to assess the role social media plays in body image and how this can have a negative influence on their attitude and behaviour.

Key questions:
• What is a 'selfie'?
• What are the social pressures, expectations, and 'norms' you face online?
• What can you do to challenge these expectations?

Time taken:
20 minutes

Activity 3

Filters and Photoshop

Ask pupils to define the term 'filter'. A filter is an image-editing function that allows users to alter the overall image in a certain way.

Reflection questions
• What is the difference between the images viewed in activity 2 (celebrity photoshop examples) and the filters we use on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat?
• Is there any negative connotations linked to filters used on social media?
• How do these filters make you feel?

As a class, read the BBC article 'Addicted to selfies: I take 200 snaps a day' February 2018
Link: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-43197018

Reflection questions:
• When you take selfies do you take multiple photos at one time to find the right one?
• Do you have a friend that's addicted to taking selfies?
• Do you think there is pressure to achieve the perfect selfie?
• If you were to post a photograph, and it didn't get any likes, how would this make you feel?
• Were these actions damaging to Danny or Junaid?
• What advice would you give Danny and Junaid?

> *Teacher Note*
> *According to scientific studies on human behaviour and attitudes, people are constantly searching for gratification, meaning we want to be praised and rewarded for the things that we do. Features on social media, such as likes and interactions, encourage this to happen. If we post something online, we are rewarded in the form of likes, comments and reactions. Our body reacts to this by releasing a chemical called 'dopamine' which makes us feel happy. Despite this, there are implications and risks associated with this such as addiction and social pressure.*

Self-image & identity

Activity 4

What is your self-image?

As a class, read the article 'Thinner, smoother, better: in the era of retouching, that's what girls have to be' by Rhiannon Lucy Cosslet. Link:
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/08/thinner-retouching-girls-image-manipulation-women

Afterwards, watch the YouTube video below by influencer Essena O'Neill describing why she quit social media.
'Why I really am quitting social media'
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmAbwTQvWX8

Reflection questions:
- Are there certain pressures linked with social media?
- What are the negative impacts of social media on self-image?
- How can you appropriately challenge negative comments about your identity online?
- How can social media be used to promote positive self-image?
- How can online content influence behaviour?
- What is an online influencer?
- Would anybody like to be an influencer in the classroom?

Key learning objectives:
To be able to…
- ✓ Give examples of how media can be created to influence attitudes and behaviour.
- ✓ Be able to appropriately challenge negative comments and expectations on my self-image and identity.
- ✓ Describe the negative impacts social media can have on my real life identity.

Key learning outcomes:
Pupils will read the article and watch the video and be able to reflect upon the social pressures and expectations they may experience online in relation to their self-image and identity. Pupils will also be able to discuss ways in which they can appropriately challenge negative comments regarding their own online identity.

Key questions:
- See reflection questions.

Time taken:
15 minutes

Activity 5

What is your self-image?

Ask pupils to define the term 'artificial intelligence' (2 minutes). Pupils to feedback their answer and then discuss, in pairs, the role AI plays in technology and social media (2 minutes). Pupils to feedback their answers to the class and further discuss the role of social bots and their impact, including how it might affect their present and future life.

Ask pupils to think about their self-identity and the way they present themselves online. Has someone ever made a negative comment online about their identity? If yes, how did they feel and how did they respond? Address the importance of telling a trusted adult and reporting negative comments. Without responding negatively, discuss how you can challenge negative comments online.

Ask pupils to create a list of all the ways a person can make a positive contribution online, including promoting kindness and respect towards others.

Key learning objectives:
To be able to...
- ✓ Explain what is meant by the term 'artificial intelligence (AI)' and explain the role AI plays online.
- ✓ Explain how AI might affect my present and future life.

Key learning outcomes:
Pupils will be able to define what the term 'artificial intelligence' means and the role AI plays online, such as social bots. Pupils will also be able to assess ways in which they can report negative comments online. Pupils will finish off the lesson by listing all the ways a person can make a positive contribution online.

Key questions:
- What is artificial intelligence?
- What is a social bot?
- Has someone ever made a negative comment online about their identity?
- If yes, how did they feel and how did they respond?

Time taken:
15 minutes