

HOW DOES THE DIGITAL WORLD MAKE YOU FEEL?

SUBJECT

Digital well-being and critical thinking

TOPIC

The emotional impact of the digital environment

DURATION

50 minutes

AGE

15+

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, students are expected to:

-  Recognise how different online experiences can influence their emotions.
-  Identify common emotional triggers in digital environments, such as social comparison, hate speech, cyberbullying and excessive social media use.
-  Reflect on their own emotional responses to online experiences.
-  Develop strategies to protect their emotional well-being while using digital technologies.
-  Make more informed and balanced choices when interacting online.

MATERIALS

- [Digital Emotion Cards](#)
- [Emotion Tracker worksheet](#)
- Whiteboard and markers
- Optional: crayons, stickers, and other materials for the students to personalise their worksheets

METHODS

- Guided class discussion
- Brainstorming
- Small group work
- Interactive card-sorting activity
- Individual reflection

PREPARATION/OPENING

Before the lesson, the teacher reviews the key concepts addressed in the lesson (social comparison, FOMO, hate speech, cyberbullying, doomscrolling and procrastination), and prepares the [Digital Emotion Cards](#) and the [Emotion Tracker](#) for each student.

The teacher can begin the lesson by asking: "Have you ever closed a social media app feeling different from when you opened it?"

Allow students to briefly share their experiences if they feel comfortable doing so. Explain that digital technologies can create many positive emotions, such as joy, connection and inspiration, but can also trigger anxiety, sadness, anger, loneliness or frustration.

LESSON STRUCTURE/DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION (15 minutes):

Ask students: "What kinds of online experiences can affect our emotions?"

Write their answers on the board.

Guide the discussion by introducing examples such as:

- receiving supportive comments
- receiving hateful comments
- being excluded from a group chat
- comparing yourself to influencers
- seeing upsetting news repeatedly
- spending too much time scrolling
- receiving many likes or positive feedback.

Explain that different people may react differently to the same online experience.

Introduce briefly:

- social comparison
- FOMO
- hate speech
- cyberbullying
- doomscrolling
- procrastination.

IMPLEMENTATION (35 minutes):

Digital Emotion Map (15 minutes)

Divide students into small groups.

Give each group a set of Digital Emotion Cards.

Students read each situation and place it under the emotion they think it is most likely to trigger. Remind them that the same situation may trigger more than one emotion and that different people may react differently:

- 😊 Happy
- 😌 Calm
- 😟 Worried
- 😞 Sad
- 😡 Angry
- 😰 Anxious

After sorting all cards, the teacher leads a brief whole-class comparison of the groups' choices.

The teacher reminds students that there is no single correct answer because people experience emotions differently.

LESSON STRUCTURE/DEVELOPMENT

Emotion Tracker (10 minutes)

After discussing how the same online situation can trigger different emotions in different people, invite students to reflect individually on their own emotional responses to digital experiences.

Students receive the Emotion Tracker.

They think about one recent online experience and complete the worksheet individually.

Make them reflect by answering these questions:

- What happened online?
- How did it make me feel?
- Why do I think I reacted this way?
- What could I do to protect my well-being next time?

Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Invite volunteers to share their reflections. Remind the class that sharing is voluntary, that no personal details are required, and that everyone's experiences and perspectives should be treated respectfully and without judgement.

Guide the discussion using questions such as:

- Which online situations affect teenagers the most?
- Why can the same post affect different people differently?
- How can hate speech or negative comments affect someone's emotional well-being?
- What can we do if we see hate speech or online harassment?
- What habits help us create a healthier digital environment?

Conclude by reminding students that becoming aware of their emotions is the first step towards protecting their digital well-being.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

- Digital Emotion Cards: [below](#)
- Emotion Tracker worksheet: [below](#)

REFERENCES

- Merrimack Scholarworks - [The Effect of Social Media on the Physical, Social Emotional, and Cognitive Development of Adolescents](#)
- Sage Journals - [Personality Traits, Motivations, and Emotional Consequences of Social Media Usage](#)
- UNICEF - [“How to talk to your children about hate speech”](#)
- internetmatters.org - [“Tackling online hate and trolling”](#)
- European Union - [“Better Internet for Kids”](#)
- [Cyberbullying Research Center](#)

CONCLUSION/ASSESSMENT

The teacher assesses students through their participation during discussions; ability to identify emotional triggers; quality of their reflections; ability to suggest appropriate strategies or balanced choices to protect their digital well-being; and completion of the Emotion Tracker.

HOMEWORK

For one week, students use the Emotion Tracker on three occasions of their choice after using social media or other digital platforms. They are encouraged to choose different types of online experiences (e.g. after viewing or interacting with content, communicating with others online, or spending time scrolling).

At the end of the week, students reflect on:

- Which emotion appeared most often?
- Which online situations affected me the most?
- What habits helped me feel better?
- What is one change I would like to make in my digital routine?

DIGITAL EMOTION CARDS

Read each card together. Discuss which emotion(s) it might trigger and sort the cards by grouping those that trigger similar emotions. Remember that the same situation may trigger more than one emotion and that different people may react differently, so be ready to explain your choices.

After sorting the cards, choose two situations and discuss one healthy strategy that could help someone manage the emotions they might experience in those situations.

You receive a kind comment congratulating you on something you achieved.

CARD 1

Someone leaves an insulting comment under one of your photos.

CARD 2

You notice that your friends met without inviting you and posted pictures together.

CARD 3

A video appears repeatedly showing unrealistic beauty standards.

CARD 4

A classmate sends you a supportive private message after a difficult day.

CARD 5

You spend an hour scrolling through negative news and upsetting videos before going to bed.

CARD 6

Your post receives many likes and positive comments.

CARD 7

Someone shares a hateful message targeting a group of people because of their religion.

CARD 8

You keep checking your phone because you're afraid of missing something important.

CARD 9

DIGITAL EMOTION CARDS

A stranger sends you a rude or offensive message online.

CARD 10

You spend much longer online than you planned and realise you haven't started your homework.

CARD 11

You read an inspiring post that motivates you to try a new hobby.

CARD 12

Your friends are chatting online. After a few hours without replying, someone writes: "Why are you ignoring us?"

CARD 13

A classmate posts an embarrassing photo of you online without asking for your permission.

CARD 14

You see friends posts about exciting events holidays, success and you start comparing your life to theirs.

CARD 15

One of your posts suddenly receives hundreds of comments, both positive and negative.

CARD 16

You send an important message, but the other person reads it and does not reply.

CARD 17

A disagreement in a group chat becomes public, and several people start taking sides.

CARD 18

EMOTION TRACKER WORKSHEET

Think about one recent online experience.

1. Which emotions did you experience?

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Excited
- ☐ Proud
- ☐ Worried
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Sad
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Frustrated

2. What happened online? (You do not need to provide details if you do not feel comfortable. You can leave this question blank and continue with the others).

3. Why do you think this situation affected you?

4. How intense was this emotion?

- ☐ Very low
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High
- ☐ Very high

5. What could you do to protect your emotional well-being next time?
