

Social Media Discussion Board Two

Human beings are social creatures. Our interactions allow us to transmit ideas, values, beliefs and behaviors amongst one another. Once large tech or media companies gain control over the information coming into our lives, they gain control over the spread of these ideas, values, beliefs and behaviors. Social media marketing materials and sales seminars boldly brag about being able directly target a population, and create noticeable changes in their beliefs and behaviors. Many of these changes are detrimental to both our individual and collective goals in society. Facilitators may use these group discussion questions to stimulate dissection and reflection on this important topic.

1. Have you ever been influenced to take part in an internet or social media challenge? Was it for your benefit or for others? How did it work out?
2. Have you ever heard of an internet challenge going wrong (Devious Licks, Chocking Challenge, Jump Kick Challenge etc.)?
3. Why would people do destructive internet challenges if it's so obvious that things will probably go wrong?
4. Do you ever hear people using words or phrases online that you know shouldn't be used in person? (Profanity, The 'N' word, "Go kill yourself", "I'm going to kill myself.") Does hearing these things online make it more or less likely that you might say them in person?
5. What is a stupid song, style, fad, person, belief or behavior that became popular online...but never should have? How do you think that happened?
6. Who really decides what spreads online, what you see online, what is endorsed or negatively stigmatized online? (The companies do.) Why should we be concerned about that? What are their motives?
7. Have you ever found it hard to do the right thing, when the right thing isn't popular? Have you ever found yourself pulled into doing the wrong thing, because everyone else seemed to be doing it?

Possible Interventions:

- A. Research has shown that much of the influence attributed to social media marketing and algorithmic amplification actually takes place on a subconscious level. We may be unaware of it, or unable to effectively counteract it. Limiting social media use is the best method of limiting its influence.
- B. Those around us are heavily influenced by social media marketing and manipulation. They then influence us in the real world. Conscious and logical reasoning can override this. Your personal values, principals and closely held beliefs act as a safeguard against social manipulation. What are your five most important personal values, principals or beliefs?
- C. Local pro-social campaigns can counteract the pervasiveness of social media messaging. Facilitators may mentor students in the creation of a pro-social messaging, which can be a source of positive influence and reinforcement. (It is recommended that local campaigns DO NOT use social media as their medium.)