

GREAT DECISIONS

1918 • FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

HIGH SCHOOL



Materials:

- [GDHS article](#)
- Paper
- Pencils/Pens
- Computer or summary of arguments for debate activity

Total Time Needed:

1–1.5 hours

Objectives:

1. To help the class identify factors impacting teen mental health.
2. Bring awareness to the positive and negative effects of technology on teen mental health.
3. Inform students of the importance of mental health
4. Analyze the effect that social media and technology has had on mental health
5. Understand and discuss the debate surrounding the extent to which social media has had an effect on mental health

LESSON 1

The causes and impacts of the Teen Mental Health Crisis

Introduction (Optional) (3.5 minutes)

- [Parks and Recreation - Social Media](#)

1. Opinion Check (5 minutes)

have students put their heads down and raise their hand if they agree with the following statements

- Are you active on some type of social media platform (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube) at least once daily?
- Do you find that social media makes it easier for you to communicate with people?
- Do you feel the same closeness with a friend while talking through a digital platform as you do when speaking in person?
- Do you find it less socially taxing to communicate with people digitally compared to an in person interaction?
- Do you find social media to be “addicting” and something that would be difficult for you to quit using?
- Have you felt that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted your mental health?

2. Room for discussion (5-10 minutes)

- Do a count of how many people say yes to each of the statements to keep them anonymous
- After each check give room for the class to discuss the counts of how many people agreed and voice their opinions about these statements

3. Reading (15 - 20 minutes)

- Read through the [GDHS Teen Mental Health Article](#)
- Option to read as a class and incorporate the discussion questions into the reading or read individually.

(Lesson 1 continued)

- After reading, students can split into groups of 3 or 4 to discuss the following questions or move to the discussion activity
 - What are some of the key takeaways from the article?
 - Do you think there is a strong correlation between social media use, isolation from the pandemic, and the rise in mental health issues
 - How does mental health and social media use relation to international politics? Or even how countries interact with each other?
- Advanced Reading
 - If students want to learn more about the effect of social media on teen mental health, here are some extra resources:
 - [Research paper discussing the merit of how to educate adolescents on social media](#)
 - [What the evidence really says about social media's impact on teens' mental health](#)

4. Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

(in small groups or as a class)

discussion questions can be used as a segway into the debate

- What do you think the consequences could be for our society in the future if kids continue to be raised online rather than engage in more in-person interactions?
- Do you think social media only heightened the negative mental health impacts of COVID-19 or gave relief from them?

- If heightened social media use is a worldwide phenomena, why do you think US teens report higher mental health issues than other countries?
- Do you think technology and social media platforms could be used to support teen mental health, and how?
- Agree or disagree: there should be an age requirement for adolescents to get smart phones and a higher and more heavily enforced age limit for social media. Why?
- Do you think that social media should be more heavily regulated and controlled, specifically the content, to decrease the number of teens who compare themselves to beauty, social, and wealth standards?
- Ask the students to conduct a vote where the teacher will ask questions about what students think about social media then discuss the results

5. Debate (5–15 minutes for information gathering, 10–20 minutes for debate)

- Split the class in half. One side debating in favor of limiting social media use and one side against social media being limited for teens.
- Have each side gather evidence to support their arguments

6. Optional Activity (10 minutes)

- Students create their own social media platform with a creative new spin or one that works to decrease the negative impact of social media on mental health (e.g. locks user out after 10 minutes per day)

Materials:

- [GDHS article](#)
- Paper
- Pencils/Pens
- Computer (activity #3)
- Mailing Materials: envelopes, stamps (activity #5)

Total Time Needed:

1.5 hours

Objectives:

1. To have the class contemplate on the current actions being taken to alleviate the teen mental health crisis.
2. To have the class think about the actions they can take to protect themselves and improve their emotional resilience.
3. Have the class understand policies other countries are taking to engage with social media

LESSON 2

Actions to remedy the Teen Mental Health Crisis

1. Do-Now (5 minutes)

- Imagine that you are a caregiver to a teenager using social media, what would you do to protect them online? Would you have any rules for social media use? If so, what would they be?

2. Actions to Remedy the Teen Mental Health Crisis (25 minutes)

- Put students into small groups to fill out the following worksheet
- Directions: Outline information on the actions mentioned in the GDHS article that are being taken to relieve the teen mental health crisis
 - Try to fill out with as many in-text references as possible

Type of Action	Outline of Action	Justification of Action	Personal Opinions: <i>What do you think about the efficacy of this action for combating the mental health crisis?</i>
Legal Action & Governmental Change			
Non-Profit Work			
Research + Recommendations			

(Lesson 2 continued)

3. Foreign Social Media Protections Research (20 minutes)

- Keep students in those same small groups to fill out the following worksheet
- Directions: How do these foreign countries monitor social media?
- Use the following resource to complete the table:
<https://bbc.com/news/technology-47135058>

Country	Program/Policy
Germany	
European Union	
Australia	
Russia	
China	

- How do these countries' social media policies protect adolescents?
- Which of these foreign policies do you think the U.S. could adopt? How?

(Lesson 2 continued)

4. Coping Mechanisms Worksheet (15 minutes)

- Put students into partners to complete the following worksheet
- For each of the following negative impacts on teen mental health, come up with 1-3 coping mechanisms you can take as an individual to enhance emotional resilience
 - Have each group focus on one of the indicators, then come together as a class to share proposed coping mechanisms
 - Use the “What *You* Can Do” section as a reference or source material to help you fill out this worksheet

Indicators of teen mental health challenges	Proposed Coping Mechanisms (1-3)
Increased at-risk behavior (i.e. risky sexual behavior, illicit substance use, adolescent pregnancy, truancy/school dropout)	
Decreased in-person social ability	
Limited emotional closeness	
Loneliness + withdrawal away from the real world into the digital one	

5. Going Further (25 minutes)

- Write to your local representative on a recommendation on how to protect kids online and on social media while still maintaining freedom. Should this be a law, an individual choice, a public campaign, etc. Use the following link to find how to contact your elected officials: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>



Teachers: [click here](#) to complete a survey letting us know how you used Great Decisions High School in your classrooms.

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