

## Activity 1: Considering the “Digital Afterlife”

**Choosing Words:** Social media can provide exciting opportunities to experiment with expressing ideas in different ways - including using humor, irony, inspirational quotes, and other attention-grabbing strategies for sharing a message. One can also use the short and snappy medium of a tweet or status update to express anger, frustration, or other strong feelings about an issue. Considering how your words might be interpreted, or misinterpreted, and taken out of context in the future is important.

Read the following tweet from a college student, Alice, who has a strong point of view about the often controversial issue of vaccination.



Consider the following questions and write your thoughts.

- What do you think Alice’s motivations for her tweet might be?
  
- What do you think about how Alice shared her perspective?
  - What are the upsides?
  - What are the possible downsides in the short-term (right after she posted it)?
  - What are the possible downsides in the long-term - in the future, even many years down the road?

- Have you ever expressed your voice about a controversial issue on social media? How did you go about it? Did you think about short-term or long-term impacts of how you shared your ideas? How did it turn out? Would you do anything differently now in hindsight?
  
- If a younger sibling or cousin came to you for advice about how to share their opinion about a controversial issue on social media, what advice would you give them?

**Navigating Different Points of View:** Young people who voice their ideas about social issues online, often develop specific strategies for managing challenging discussions. For example, the following online exchange starts with a post by Sarah, a young person who uses social media to voice her concerns about beauty expectations and support for people of all different body shapes and sizes.

Read the exchange carefully. As you read, pay particular attention to Toby's comments and Sarah's response to him.



**Sarah**

To end this years Be Your True Self Day, I want to once more say thank you. Again, I don't really know how to thank people who are making your dreams come true. I don't think their anything I can say...

Like · Comment · 40 minutes ago · 🌐

👍 64 people like this.



**Toby** Listen, Sarah. You're a really cool person and I admire your courage and such.

...But, if you seriously think that a day filled with meaningless fluff-ball compliments from random people who don't really care about the individual is gonna help with anybody's insecurities, then you really need to re-evaluate your situation. People don't need to be coddled into ignorance, they need to learn to deal with their problems and accept them for who they are. Not what some random persons sticky notes think about them. Probably gonna get a lot of hate for this, but you know me, spreading seeds of discontent wherever I go.

27 minutes ago · Like



**Sarah** I don't hate you! And I respect you're opinion. I understand where you're coming from, but theirs also a whole other side to the story. I've met a lot of people who have been impacted by this day, and if it can help one person, then every sticky note and minute of time is worth it. The sticky notes are written with genuine hearts, love and care. if that's enough to encourage and motivate someone to accept their situation, then why not? Anyway, I don't want to tell you your wrong because I truly do respect your opinion! Just wanted to share my point of view!

16 minutes ago · Like · 👍 3



Write a comment ...

After reading the exchange, talk with a partner and compare notes about the exchange. Write a response to the following questions:

- How does Sarah respond to Toby's comment? What does she say and how does she say it?
  
- How does Sarah's strategies connect with what you already do or have seen others do when they respond to online comments?
  
- Based on discussing this exchange with a classmate, what new ideas do you have about managing a challenging online discussion? Can you envision yourself using these strategies? Why or why not?
  
- What additional advice might you give to this young person - and other youth who use social media to discuss social issues?