



Online stress and FOMO

(the ‘fear of missing out’)

In this lesson students explore how stress may be experienced as a consequence of excessive use of social media and how this can impact on their daily lives. This includes FOMO, the ‘fear of missing out’ on anything from an exciting event to a conversation that their friends are having – or even just general social media updates.

Using peer-to-peer activities based on Rise Above films, students will discuss how they might manage any online stress, and understand the importance of asking for help when needed.

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Curriculum links to the PSHE Association Programme of Study

KS3

Core theme 1: Health and wellbeing

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- the characteristics of mental and emotional health and strategies for managing it.

Core theme 2: Relationships

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- the qualities and behaviours they should expect and exhibit in a wide variety of positive relationships (including teams, class, friendships etc.)
- different types of relationships, including those within families, friendships, romantic or intimate relationships and the factors that can affect these (including age, gender, power and interests).

KS4

Core theme 1: Health and wellbeing

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- the characteristics of emotional and mental health and the causes, symptoms and treatments of some mental and emotional health disorders (including stress, anxiety and depression)
- strategies for managing mental health including stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide, and sources of help and support.

Core theme 2: Relationships

Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

- strategies to manage strong emotions and feelings
- the characteristics and benefits of positive, strong, supportive, equal relationships

- to recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including rape) and strategies to manage this or get help
- managing changes in personal relationships including the ending of relationships
- to develop an awareness of exploitation, bullying and harassment in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online bullying and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse in all types of teenage relationships, including in group settings such as gangs) and the skills and strategies to respond appropriately or access support.

>> Learning objectives

We are learning how to manage the stress that may result from excessive use of social media or as a result of interacting with online content, including FOMO (the ‘fear of missing out’).

>> Learning outcomes

Pupils can:

- recognise the difference between online and real friends and understand that social media sometimes does not reflect real life
- know from whom to get help and advice about online stress, including the Rise Above website
- identify helpful strategies to manage online stress.

Preparation

Before delivering the lesson:

- visit the Rise Above website (riseabove.org.uk) and Rise Above YouTube channel and familiarise yourself with its content
- read [Introduction to Rise Above](#).

Climate for learning

Read through [Guidance for learning in a safe environment](#). This includes advice on:

- developing and revisiting effective ground rules drawn up with students
- familiarity with your school’s safeguarding policy and procedures, including Child Protection and other relevant policies
- being prepared in case students make a disclosure
- including and protecting vulnerable students
- using distancing techniques so that students can discuss sensitive issues without being encouraged to make a disclosure
- handling sensitive questions
- involving students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Anonymous question box

A question box or envelope should be placed somewhere in the classroom. Students are encouraged to write down any questions that occur to them during the lesson and submit them anonymously. Teachers can address these questions in the next lesson or form time.

Students can also post anonymous questions to the Rise Above Twitter account (@We_RiseAbove) or the [Rise Above MTV Wall](#). You may wish to display these links during the lesson and/or write them on your question box or envelope.

Students can submit question anonymously via Twitter or the MTV wall and will be answered by one of the Rise Above team who are there to help at all times, even over the weekend. Students’ anonymity will always be protected and if needed, they will receive advice as to where to seek help and guidance from next.

Rise Above moderate every comment and follow a set procedure for managing disclosures and safeguarding.

>> Resources

- [Online Stress!](#) animation
- [Be yourself!](#) film
- Access to the Rise Above website
- Very large sheets of paper and marker pens
- Sticky notes

>> Time

60-90 minutes, depending on time available

>> Key vocabulary

Online, social media, post, followers, comments, likes, unfollowing, blocking, trolling, YOLO (you only live once), FOMO (fear of missing out), phubbing ('phone snubbing', or paying more attention to your phone than to the real people you're with), sharing, uploading, content, views, selfies

Baseline assessment

The starter activities below introduce the topic of online stress in a safe, non-threatening way, enabling you to find out what students already know or perceive about online stress. You can choose to revisit them in the plenary to show evidence of students' progress.

Before you begin, establish or review your ground rules for learning in a safe environment.



What do I think about social media? Graffiti wall (5-10 minutes)

Put up large sheets of paper around the classroom and write one of the questions below on each sheet. Students circulate in small groups and write a brief response under each question – as an option, they can write the responses in the form of tweets using 140 characters. Circulate groups rapidly between each sheet of paper to add their comments.

Questions

- What matters most in a real-life friendship?
- What matters most with online friends or followers?
- What are the positive sides to social media?
- What are the potentially negative sides to social media?
- How can social media make people feel?

Once all the groups have circulated and added their thoughts, pick some students to read through each sheet.



How do you feel? (5 minutes)

This is a before and after self-assessment activity. Students reflect on how they feel about the topic of online stress at the beginning of the lesson and again at the end of the lesson, to see whether their feelings have changed.

Students should answer the question '**How do you feel about online stress, such as FOMO**' by picking an emoji that expresses their feelings. To help them choose their emoji they can use these differentiated statements as prompts:

Lower

- I can go without using my phone or social media without it affecting my mood.
- Social media can sometimes get me down.
- I have experienced FOMO because of social media.
- I know where to get help or advice if something gets out of hand online.

Higher

- I can help a friend who is having a hard time online.
- I know how to respond if someone is negative to me online.

Alternatively, students can place themselves on a 'confidence line' drawn on paper, with 'not at all confident' at one end, and 'completely confident' at the other.

The emojis (or confidence lines) can be shown to the teacher using mini white boards, or handed in on cards at the end of the lesson.

This is a self-reflection activity - students should never be asked to share personal information with their peers.

Core activities



FOMO – Think, Pair, Share (5-10 minutes)

Students pair up and discuss the following:

- How would you describe FOMO?
- How would you define stress?
- Do you think that FOMO is regularly experienced by young people? What might be the reasons they experience it?
- What advice would you give a friend who was experiencing stress all the time because of FOMO?

Then group together with another pair and watch the **Online stress!** animation.

The group shares their reactions to the film.

- Do they agree with what it says about social media?
- Are there any parts they disagree with?
- Why is it important to understand that some people's social media profiles may not reflect reality?



Real friends vs. online friends (10-15 minutes)

Review the advice given in the film: to avoid stress and anxiety it's important to switch off social media regularly and stay connected with real life, real people and real friends. Don't let social media become a substitute for real-life connections with family, friends and other people.

In their groups students draw out two silhouettes: 'A real-life friend' and 'An online friend'. Around each silhouette, students write down words that describe that person.

Discuss:

- What are the most significant differences between a person's real-life friends and those they only interact with online?
- What is a real friendship really about? What qualities do you look for in a good friend?
- What are online friendships really about? What are the potential benefits, disadvantages and risks to communicating online?
- Does it matter if you talk to your friends mainly online rather than face to face?
- What effect can 'phubbing' ('phone snubbing', or paying more attention to your phone than to the real people you're with) have on relationships and friendships? Why do people do it?



Wall of ideas: how to deal with stress (10-20 minutes)

Students now browse the Rise Above site (riseabove.org.uk) independently to find any tips and advice about:

- coping with stress
- how to have conversations that may be awkward, for example telling someone that you are in a worrying situation online.

Explain to students that Rise Above was created by young people for young people, and that it's a safe and anonymous space for them to find helpful information and talk about the things that matter to them.

Allow students to browse the site independently. Be on hand to answer students' questions if needed. Students should write the tips and advice they find on post-it notes for sharing with the class.

Wall of ideas

After browsing, the class creates a ‘wall of ideas’ for dealing with social media and online stress using their individual post-it notes. Students can include their own ideas and tips that have been suggested in the lesson already, as well as those they found on the Rise Above site. As a class, read through the wall of ideas and discuss the tips and advice.

Plenaries

Use these plenary ideas to summarise learning and identify next steps.

Positive posts (10 minutes)

In small groups, students generate quick ideas for a social media post that will suggest tips for avoiding online stress, for example FOMO, perhaps using the **Be Yourself** film for ideas.

- Which social media channel would they choose: a tweet, Snapchat, Facebook or Instagram post or YouTube video?
- What would the main message be?
- How can they make it stand out?

Students share their ideas with the class, and offer constructive suggestions to improve each other's concepts. As an extension or in a follow-up lesson, students can actually create these ideas, for example making video clips using their phones.



How do you feel? (5 minutes)

Students think back to the emoji or confidence line that they shared at the start of the session in answer to the question **‘How do you feel about online stress such as FOMO?’**

Now they should choose another emoji, or position themselves on the confidence line again, to answer the same questions, using the following prompt questions to help them:

- Have your feelings about online stress changed since the beginning of the class?
- Do you feel more confident about how to avoid online confrontations?
- Do you know where (or from whom) you can get advice or help if you need it?
- Can you think of ways you can balance being online with being with your real friends?

The emojis (or confidence lines) can be shown to the teacher using mini white boards or handed in on cards at the end of the lesson.



I can! (5 minutes)

Students should imagine that they are with a friend who is experiencing online stress or FOMO. They should complete one or two ‘I can’ statements that identify how they can now help and advise their friend.

- If someone I know is stressing about what’s happening online, I can...
- If I know someone has FOMO, I can...
- When someone I know is being treated badly online, I can...
- To stay positive when they are online, I would advise my friend to...

Before the end of class, remind students about the importance of asking for help if they need it, and encourage them to visit Rise Above in their own time.



Extension ideas

Remember that the learning doesn’t stop now. Each Rise Above lesson can be followed up using the extension ideas below:

Vox pops and other video or audio

Students can create video clips of their ideas, interview their friends and create a vox pop compilation, or develop video clips which capture role-played examples of what can happen and how to respond.

Leaflets and artwork

Students can share their ideas by creating leaflets or posters that provide help and advice in their own words, and which draw on what they discover on the Rise Above website. This can include advice or creative responses like poems, rap lyrics, photos and visual art to convey students’ messages.

Displays

Students can draw on their ideas to create displays of written work, images or video clips for your foyer. This is a great way to share students’ learning and creative responses with other students and with adult visitors to your school.

Student-led assemblies

Students can develop their ideas into presentations, video clips and role plays that they can build into an assembly for a year group or the whole school. This can stand alone or link to displays and peer-led learning sessions.

Peer-led learning sessions

Students can develop versions of the activities they have done in the lesson that they can deliver with younger students, and which include the media they create to articulate their ideas in their own words. These can take place in tutor time, timetabled lessons, out of lesson time or as a suspended timetable activity.

