📄 Day 3: Lesson 2-5 Risky Online Relationships

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Essential Questions

How can you tell when an online relationship is risky?

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to...

- **compare and contrast stereotypes and realities when it come to Internet "stranger danger."**
- **learn guidelines for determining safe online relationships, especially wth strangers or casual acquaintances.**
- **brainstorm ways to help teens avoid risky online behavior.**

Warm-up

Introduce the idea that the internet thrives because people want to share with, learn from, and respond to others online. Point out that there are many different types of online interactions between people who don't know each other in an offline setting. These interactions are sometimes positive, and at other times they can make us feel uncomfortable.

ASK

Q1: What are some examples of positive interactions between strangers online?

A1: Sample Responses:

- Selling you own products or possessions online
- Responding to internship or job opportunities online
- Leaviing comments on other people's blogs, even if you don't know them personally.
- Playing games or interacting in virtual worlds wiht people you don't know offline.

Q2: What are some examples of uncomfortable interactions between strangers online?

A2: Sample Responses

- Dealing with awkward friend requests from people you don't know well
- Receiving mean or creepy comments from strangers
- Getting spam or junk mail

- Seeing IMs from unknown screen names

Point out that there are many different kinds of online encounters with strangers that may make us feel uncomfortable. Some are harmless and easy to laugh off or forget about. Other encounters might affect us, or our friends, more seriously.

The Myths and Realities of "Online Predators"

Explain that people often use the term *online predator* to describe one of the most serious kinds of situations with a stranger online.

Define the Key Vocabulary term **online predator. (a commonly used term for someone who uses the Internet to develop inappropriate relationships with kids or teens)**

Explain that many people worry about online predators, but their impressions do not always match up with reality. This is because news stories tend to cover the most extreme predator cases. They also often present these cases in ways that make people fearful of specific stereotypes.

Define the Key Vocabulary term **Stereotype. (a popular belief about a group of people, based on assumptions that are often false)**

Ask: What are some common stereotypes of online predators?

A1: Sample Responses:

- Online predators are creepy old men
- They are interested in sexual things with little kids
- They pretend to be kids online and convince other kids to do things that they don't want to do
- They try to gain kids' trust and lure them offline to kidnap them

Share the following facts that debunk the online predator stereotype:

1. Teens are more likely to receive requests to talk about sexual things online from other teens or from young adults (ages 18 to 25) than they are from older adults.
2. The small percentage of adults that does seek out relationships with teens online are usually up-front about their age, and about their sexual interests.
3. Teens who develop an ongoing online connection with someone they don't know, or who are willing to talk about sexual things online, are more likely to find themselves in a risky online relationship.
4. Risky online relationships don't always involve total strangers; sometimes they involve people that teens have initially met offline.

Define the key vocabulary term **risky (potentially harmful to one's emotional or physcial well-being)** (Guide students to consider how flirty conversations online may seem exciting or

flattering, but that they also have the potential to be upsetting or feel abusive. They should know that people may in fact say or do things online that they would not in person. Students should also know that they may feel used, uncomfortable, or violated while chatting with people online- whether it's with someone their own age or older.)

Risky Situations

Define the key vocabulary term **manipulate. (trying to influence somebody to do something they might not otherwise do, for one's own benefit)**

Ask:

Why might it be tricky for people to recognize when they are being manipulated, especially online?

A1: Encourage students to think about the emotional and legal issues that may arise when younger people develop romantic, or sexual, relationships online with older people, or even with people their own age.

Show Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jMhMVEjEQg

Share Tips for Avoiding Risky Online Relationships

- **Change it up.** If something feels like it might be getting risky, it probably is. But if you're not sure, try changing the subject, making a joke, or saying you want to talk about something else. If you still feel pressured by or uncomfortable with the situation, you need to take further action.
- **Log off or quit.** You need to remember that at any time you can just stop typing and log off if a conversation gets uncomfortable online. You can also take action to block or report another user, or create a new account to avoid contact with that person again.
- **Know that it's okay to feel embarrassed or confused.** It's not always easy to make sense of situations that make you uncomfortable online. Nor is it easy to ask for help if you feel embarrassed about what you've experienced. These feeling are normal, and it's okay to talk about them.
- **Talk to a friend or trusted adult.** Don't be afraid to reach out. Even if you feel you can handle a tricky situation alone, it's always a good idea to turn to friends, parents, teachers, coaches, or counselors for support.

Wrap Up

Ask:

Q1: Why is the term online predator misleading? What is the reality when it comes to risky online relationships?

A1: Students should be aware of the sterotype that there are creepy older men lurking on the internet, looking for kids. These kinds of online predators do exist, but they are not that common. Teens themselves and young adults are more likely than older adults to ask teens about sexual things online. Also, the small percentage of adults that are actually interested in developing relationships with teens online are usually upfront about their age and about their inappropriate intentions.

Q2: How can you avoid getting involved in risky online relationships?

A2: Students should be wary of any onlline relationship with strangers or acquaintances who are older than they are. They should avoid flirting online with people they don't know face-to-face - whether it's a joke or whether it's serious - be aware of people trying to manipulate them. If anything makes them uncomfortable, they should take action to stop it. They should also tell a trusted adult if they or their friends are in danger.

Q3: What are some examples of ways that people connect safely, responsibly, and positively with others online?

A3: Students' answers will vary. Guide students to recognize that there are many benefits to networking, sharing, and collaborating with people online. It's a matter of knowing when relationships turn risky.