



Module 5. Social media for social responsibility and its role in tackling climate change: heroes to the rescue!

Session 2. Suiting up: social media for social responsibility

Project Number
2021-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000026310



Co-funded by
the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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Can we do the right thing?

As a depiction of the environmental challenges ahead, we suggest you first watch Waterwise's touching music video *What did you do when there was still time?*

Activity 2.1 for an individual or group (10 mins): This music video is very different from the one in the first session. You can answer these questions by writing or talking:

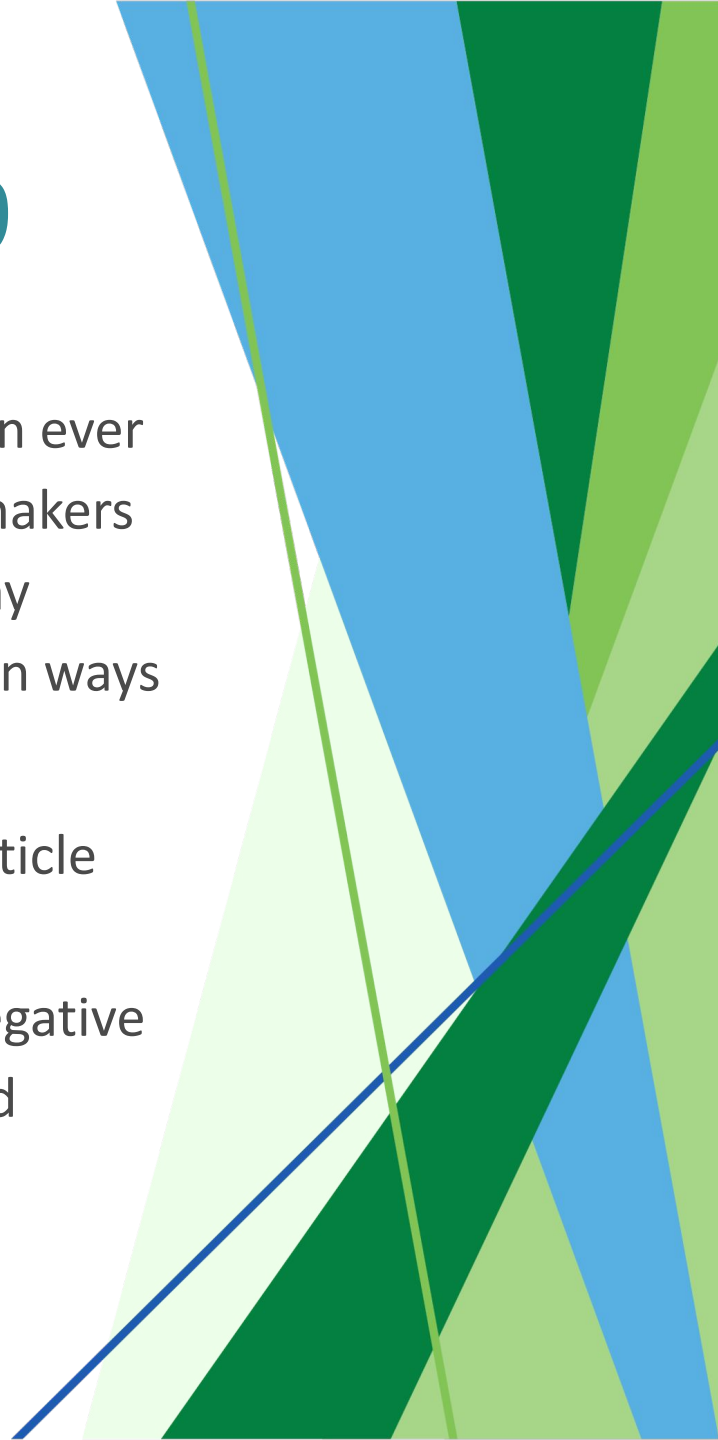
- What are the major differences between the two videos?
- How does this video evoke our sense of social responsibility?



Social media's helps and hurts 1/9

Young people are spending more time online and on social media than ever before. This has caused consternation among some parents and lawmakers concerned about the negative impacts of social media. However, many students have developed more nuanced approaches, finding their own ways to tap the benefits and mitigate the harms of social media.

Please read aloud the following excerpts from two articles. The first article explores the positive impact of social media and online platforms in developing and supporting young people. The second explores the negative impacts of these platforms, including on young people in marginalized communities.



Social media's helps and hurts 2/9

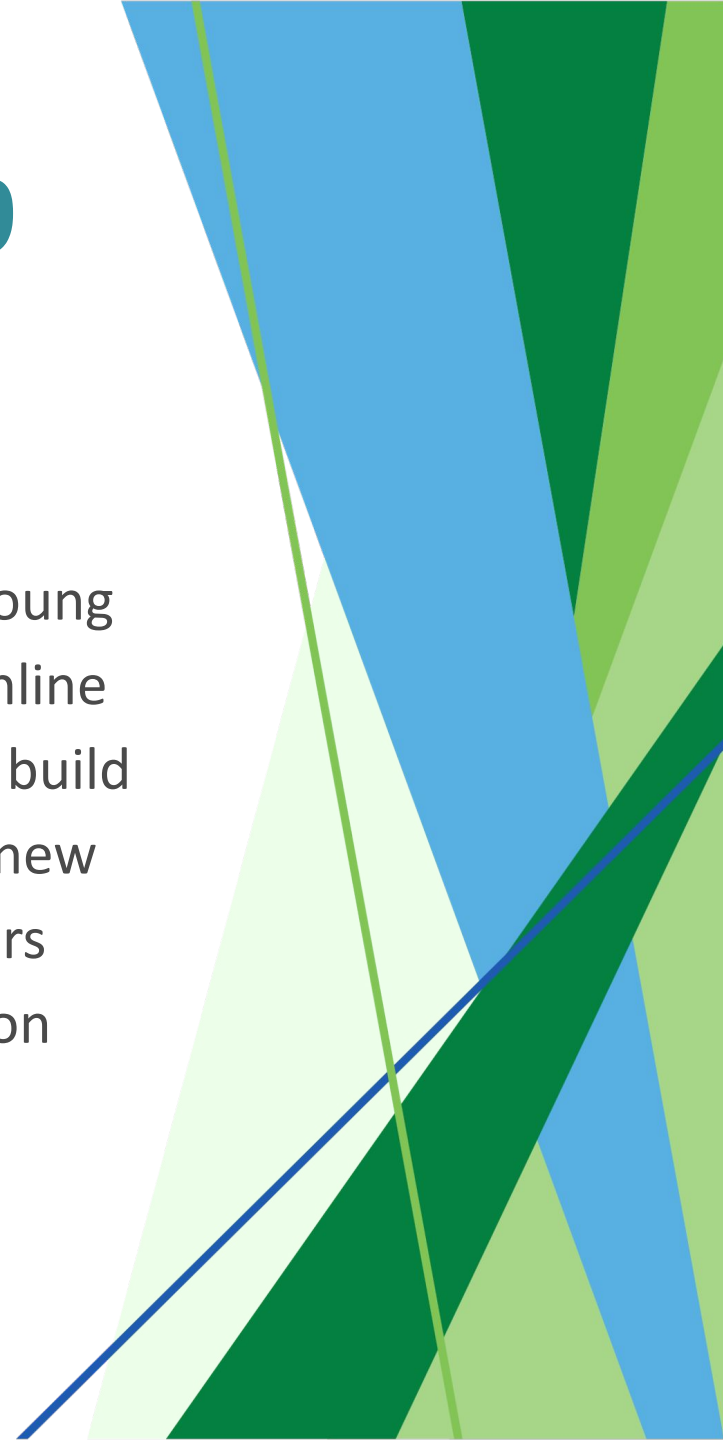
Reading 1: finding support. In an April 2021 article for The Conversation, graduate student researcher Benjamin Kaveladze summarized his recent study on young people seeking community support online:

Popular criticisms, such as the 2020 documentary “The Social Dilemma,” have argued that social networking sites like Instagram warp young users’ perceptions of reality, causing them psychological distress....

Social media's helps and hurts 3/9

(continued:)

These concerns have some merit, but they may underestimate young people's resilience and ability to adapt to new social contexts. Online communities can also provide opportunities for young people to build social skills, share genuine interactions and discover and dissect new ideas with peers worldwide....These support forums provide users with valuable advice, emotional support, belonging, and validation that are not available from their in-person communities...

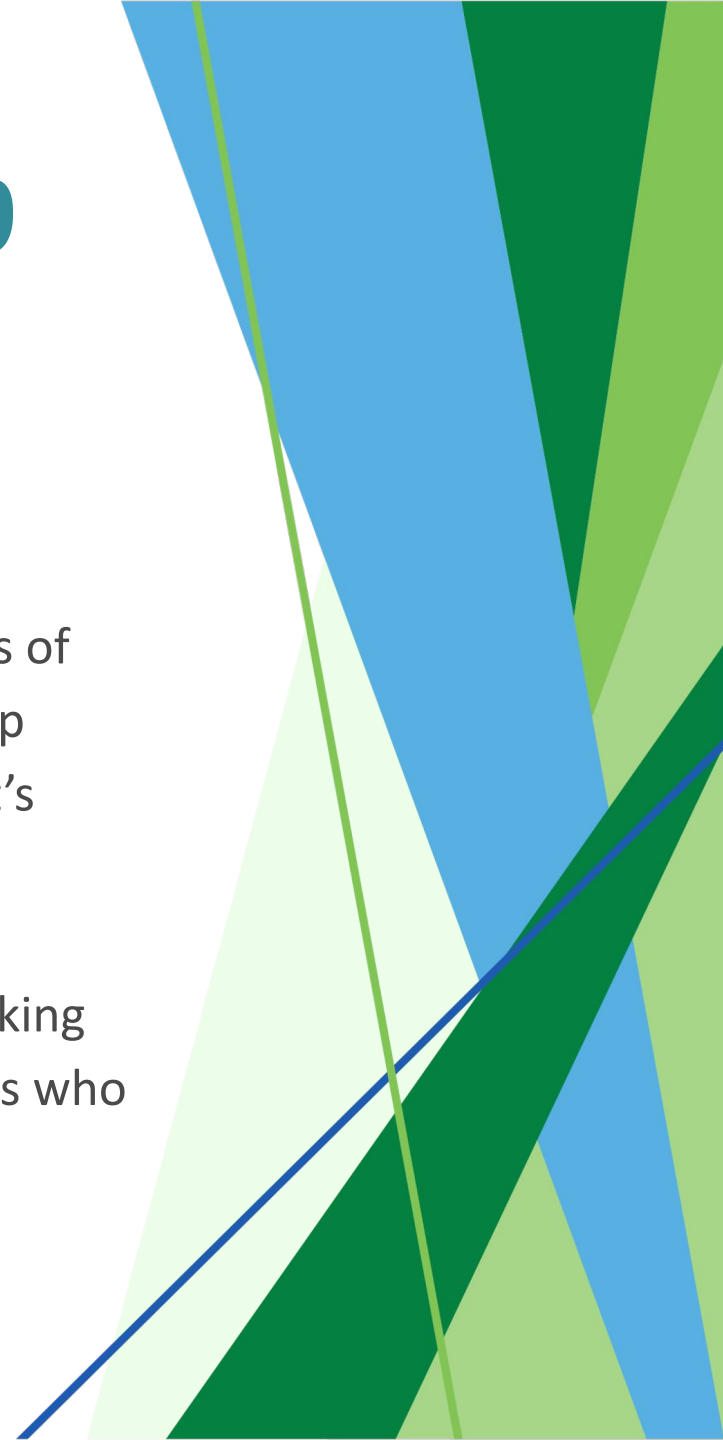


Social media's helps and hurts 4/9

(continued:)

... Many young people experiencing personal struggles turn to online communities to seek support. Some reach out to text-message group chats of close friends to vent and ask for advice. Others prefer to privately seek help from strangers around the world in anonymous support forums like Reddit's r/Anxiety, which often has over 1,000 members online at any given time.

Online, young people can avoid the social stigma that often comes with asking for help in person and are not limited by geographical barriers to find peers who share their backgrounds or perspectives.



Social media's helps and hurts 5/9

Reading 2: experiencing harm. Online exposure to racism, sexism, ableism, and more can come without warning and affect a wide range of young people. In a December 2018 article for New America, policy analysts Spandana Ringh and Dillon Roseen wrote of the case of one young person whose life was disrupted by online harassment:

For Rabia, it didn't take long for the abuse to start. Shortly after landing the editorial internship of her dreams and publishing her first major story, she began receiving vitriolic threats and insults across her personal and professional accounts online. The flood of incoming messages was overwhelming and deeply personal, often infused with overt anti-Muslim and sexist language. As soon as Rabia reported one threat to an online platform, another three would pop up to take its place...

Social media's helps and hurts 6/9

(continued:)

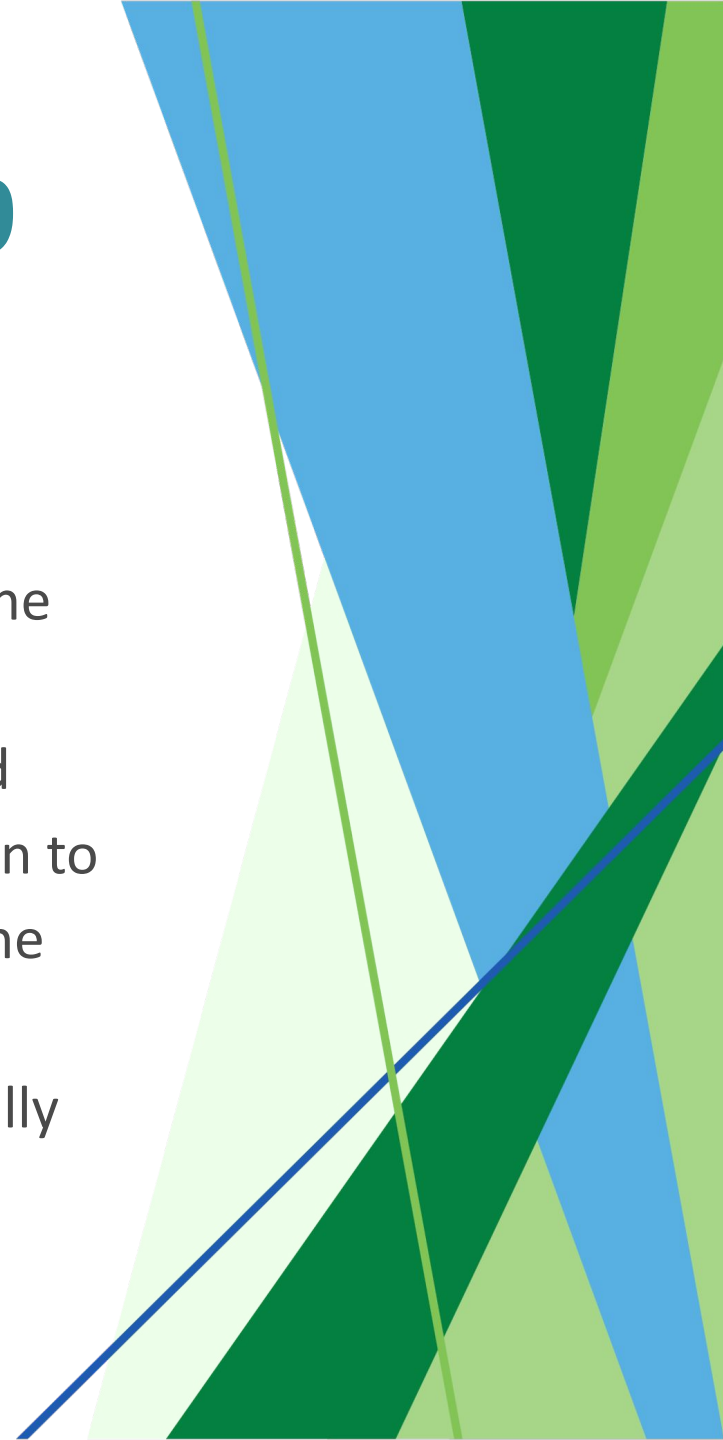
...As the online attacks against her grew, so did the consequences. First, she was doxxed—her cell phone number, home address, and the names and addresses of her family were shared online. Unsurprisingly, after this, she and her family received calls from people threatening to kill them.



Social media's helps and hurts 7/9

(continued:)

When they reported the incidents to law enforcement officers, the remedies were ineffective, mostly because, despite their best intentions, the local law enforcement agents lacked the skills and resources needed to help in Rabia's situation. With no one to turn to and no way to stop the abuse, Rabia did the only thing she felt she could do: She curtailed her writing and restricted her use of the internet, for fear of being targeted again or, worse, being physically harmed.



Social media's helps and hurts 8/9

Activity 2.2 for an individual or group (10 mins): pair share A

Pick a pair. Each person will have 5 minutes to respond to this prompt: “Share a time in your life, recently if possible, where you had to deal with something challenging online.”

- What happened and how did you respond?
- What went well?
- What might you have done differently?

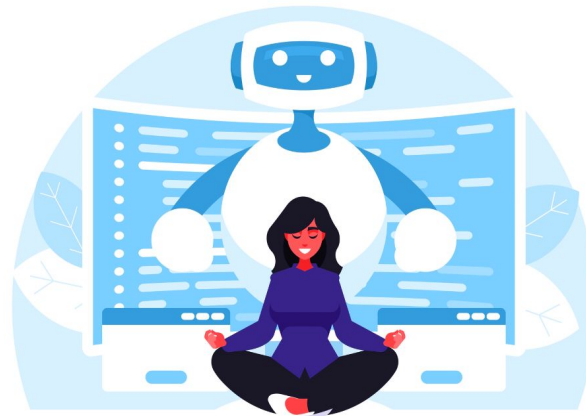


Social media's helps and hurts 9/9

Activity 2.3 for an individual or group (10 mins): pair share B

In pairs again, each person has 5 minutes to respond to this prompt: “Share a time in your life, recently if possible, where you found support online.”

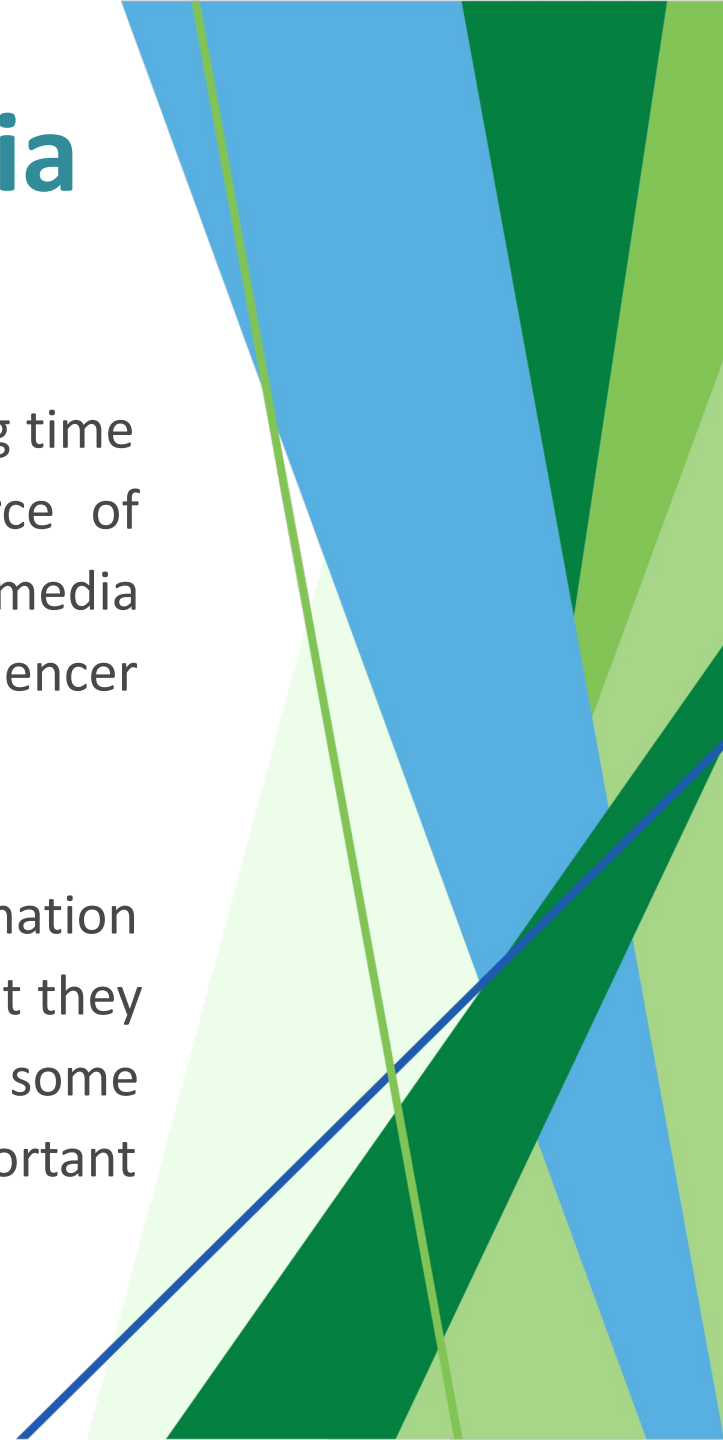
- What happened?
- How did it make you feel?



Social responsibility of social media heroes 1/2

Young people follow influencers more than others, mostly for passing time and entertainment. They see influencers as an important source of information, which makes the influencers' voices loud. Social media platforms are increasingly interdependent on influencers, and influencer marketing has become an effective and popular way of marketing.

Influencers are not journalists, even though they disseminate information to their audience. They decide when and what they publish and what they leave out. In addition to their personally produced content, some influencers want to share and discuss controversial and globally important topics.



Social responsibility of social media heroes 2/2

Influencers create and share content that they believe is useful for their audience. Being true to oneself (authenticity) is used to build trust in the audience (credibility).

Some content can be hyped-up and create false expectations. This would be against the journalistic code of ethics. Professional journalists are conscious of the manipulability of information in the age of propaganda. In the light of ethics, influencers should not provide false information or distort the truth.

Activity 2.4 for an individual (10 mins): Who's the hero YOU are following on social media? Send a private or public message to him/her, honestly assessing how s/he performs in terms of social responsibility.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 1/7

Social media networks draw on our human need to socialize. Individuals and businesses use social media to expand their reach and networks, often without considering the longer-term consequences of their actions.

At its core, social media is about the interactions of real people. Being transparent in these forums pulls back the veil that some individuals and companies use to hide their true identity, regardless of the reason, either good or bad. While this social media evolution has increased our connectedness, we need to remember that behind every Facebook page, blog post, YouTube video and tweet is a live person with real emotions.



10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 2/7

Just as Spiderman learnt that with great power comes great responsibility, we who connect and share in the social media ecosystem, need to apply this to our actions. Here are ten factors to consider:

1. **Know that your audience consists of real people** with broader, more diverse backgrounds than you can imagine. Each individual brings a unique perspective that you might not have considered previously. At a minimum, they deserve your respect for giving you their attention.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 3/7

- 2. Don't react in haste.** In online interactions, people tend to disassociate themselves from the person to whom they're communicating. We don't think about the person at the other end when we talk with our fingertips. As a result, people often express opinions that they wouldn't on the phone or in person. Count to ten to give yourself space to think before you respond, especially when your feelings are raw.
- 3. Appreciate that online actions are permanent** and can't be reversed. There may not be an Undo action for a sent message. Moreover, the Internet never forgets. Any message sent can come back to haunt its sender, usually when it's least desired.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 4/7

- 4. Understand the context of interactions and content presented.**
Don't respond to partial messages. Don't let your feelings rule. Put the information in perspective and be sure you understand it before responding.
- 5. Don't judge an idea's quality by the syntax and grammar** in which it's expressed. With a broad audience, the people with whom you engage may not be native speakers of your language or have similar levels of education. Don't let this detract you from the core of what they're trying to communicate.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 5/7

6. **Consider what you'd say face-to-face or in a live group.** Don't blindly follow the group. As your mother taught you, show a level of civility and an understanding for where others may be coming from. Remember you haven't walked in their shoes.
7. **Don't spread gossip and hearsay** in your quest for your fifteen seconds of fame. Make a positive contribution to the public discourse.
8. **Check your facts before you contribute.** Your audience knows more than you do and will call you out for factual errors. Wikipedia is an example of the combined intelligence of the mass. While one person may not be an expert on everything, together they're very smart with lots of fact checkers who aren't afraid to correct you.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 6/7

9. **Stay on point with your contributions.** Social media is a conversation, not a lecture. Leave space for others to broaden the discussion and make it richer. Remember it's a conversation held in a public forum. Be polite and play well with others.
10. **Don't be self-centered.** Don't bore others with your me-me-me focus and/or promotion overload. It's the fastest way to clear a forum. The sweetest thing a person can hear is their name and your sincere interest in them.

10 ways to make your social media posting accountable 7/7

At the core, our actions and contributions on social media platforms should follow the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Since the social media ecosphere expands each person’s reach exponentially and speeds message distribution, it’s easy to forget that behind each screen is a human being with real feelings. As individuals and changemakers, we need to integrate this into our social media interactions. Happy posting! 🏄🏻‍♀️ 😊

Activity 2.5 for a group (10 mins): Each participant chooses one of their recent posts on social media (e.g. as a response to Activity 1.1 or 1.4), and then assesses how well it meets the 10 criteria above. Finally, have a group discussion in which everyone can share their findings.

References

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**Co-funded by
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