

## Essential Question: How do you judge the intentions and impact of people's words and actions online?

### Learning Overview and Objectives

*Overview:* Students will learn to assess people's intentions and the impact of their words and actions, both positive and negative, in online environments.

Students will learn about the benefits and drawbacks of online relationships by watching the ***Student Intro Video – Our Connected Culture***. They are then introduced to a variety of scenarios about online relationships and physically chart each situation on an axis to identify how online communication can be helpful or hurtful (impact), and whether it might be intentional or unintentional (intent). Students must explain their reasoning and offer steps to take toward a solution.

#### objectives

*Students will:*

- Be able to imagine the motivations, feelings, and intentions of others as they relate to a variety of online exchanges
- Debate the level of harm and intentionality involved in these online exchanges
- Propose constructive solutions to online interpersonal dilemmas that exemplify ethical behavior

### Materials and Preparation

#### *Materials*

- ***Student Intro Video – Our Connected Culture***
- **You Chart It Student Handout**
- Masking tape or string and four pieces of blank paper

#### *Preparation*

- Download or stream the ***Connected Culture Intro Video – Our Connected Culture***
- Make copies of the **You Chart It Student Handout** for all students
- Move desks to the room's perimeter. Make x and y axes on the floor with masking tape or string. Label the axes with paper as follows: X Axis = "Hurtful (left)" and "Helpful (right);" Y Axis = "Intentional" (top) and "Unintentional" (bottom). (Optional, though this can be done during class.)
- Review the **You Chart It Student Handout**

#### *Parent Resources*

- Send home the **Connected Culture Parent Tip Sheet**
- Send home the **Connected Culture Parent/Teacher Intro Video**



## Chart It

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#### Key Vocabulary

- **Anonymous:** Having an unknown identity
- **Social Media:** Digital media and technologies based on social interaction and participation
- **Ethics:** A set of principles and morals governing people's behavior (An ethical person is thought to treat others with respect, care, and dignity)
- **Online Ethics:** A set of principles and morals governing people's behavior as it relates to the online world
- **Intentional:** To do something on purpose
- **Impact:** To have an effect

#### teaching plans

#### Introduce

**SHOW** the *Connected Culture Intro Video – Our Connected Culture*. Tell students that the video will introduce them to a variety of positive and negative ways that people interact with one another online. Remind students to notice the ways people connect over digital media, and both the positive and negative relationships that occur.

#### Teach 1: Introduce Online Ethics

##### ASK

*What are ways that people connect and communicate with each other through digital media?*

Sample responses:

- *Texting*
- *IMing*
- *Social networking*
- *Sharing creations*

*What are ethics?* (A set of principles and morals governing people's behavior. An ethical person is thought to treat others with respect, care, and dignity. Someone who is unethical treats others unfairly, unjustly, and irresponsibly.)

*What are online ethics?* (Ethics as it relates to using digital technology.)

*What are some of the ways that online relationships are different than offline relationships?*

Sample responses:

- *People are sometimes bolder or more outgoing when communicating online than offline because they are not meeting face to face*
- *Aside from video chat, people usually do not have facial cues and body language online to help them understand people's intentions*





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Estimated time: 45 minutes

- *Mean comments may have greater impact, as they may be public, and because people are sometimes bolder when they are anonymous*

**EXPLAIN** that when we are online, our choices can affect how we communicate with others and impact our relationships with others. Talk about how each person can be a good friend, family member, student, or citizen and do things that are helpful to others. However, when we are online we can also hurt others. Explain that sometimes we may hurt someone on purpose, but at other times we might hurt someone without even knowing it because we can't see the effects of our actions down the line. **REMIND** students that when it comes to being a good person online, it is important to reflect carefully on how our choices – as simple as a click of the mouse or the push of a button – can affect the lives of others.

## Teach 2: Introduce Online Ethics Chart

(Optional) **CREATE** a life-size ethics Chart It Grid. Have students move their desks to the room's perimeter. Make x and y axes on the floor with masking tape or string. Label the axes with paper as follows: X Axis = "Hurtful" (left) and "Helpful" (right); Y Axis = "Intentional" (top) and "Unintentional" (bottom).

**INTRODUCE** the following four x and y axis points on the grid:

### *The Y Axis: The Intention*

**Unintentional:** Even if we don't intend to help or hurt someone, effects from the choices we make can be unintentional. Unintentional effects can happen by accident, laziness, or by simply not taking a moment to consider the possible consequences of a choice we make.

**Intentional:** Hurting or helping someone intentionally means that we do it on purpose; we make a choice to help or hurt.

### *The X Axis: The Impact*

**Helpful:** Being helpful when it comes to online ethics means affecting others in a positive way by the choices you make online. Helpful choices include caring behavior, such as acts of kindness, making ethical choices, contributing in a positive way to an online community, and thinking about the repercussions for others before you make a decision that might affect another person.

**Hurtful:** Being hurtful means that something you do or a choice you make in the digital world damages someone else's reputation or self-esteem. We often think that hurtful behavior happens on purpose, but sometimes we can hurt someone without even knowing it because our actions affect the other person at a later time.

## Teach 3: Chart Ethics Scenarios

**DISTRIBUTE** the **You Chart It Student Handout** and say that it is a paper version of the large chart that you have just introduced.

**READ** the scenarios from the **You Chart It Student Handout** one by one with students standing on the





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perimeter of the grid with the Student Handout in hand. (Note that there is information in each scenario that is not directly relevant to the ethics discussion. This information is included because it provides a more engaging context for the scenarios.) For each scenario, ask students to consider the place along each axis that best represents the intentions (y axis, unintentional/intentional) of the person whose name is bolded and the impact of his or her behavior (x axis, helpful/hurtful). For instance, if it seems that the person whose name is bolded meant to hurt someone online and it had a very negative impact on the person, the dot on the grid would be in the very top-left corner.

**INVITE** five to six students to stand on the class-sized grid in the same spot that they marked on their grid for each scenario. (You may not have time to chart all of the scenarios as a class. Choose the ones that seem most relevant to your students.) Students will generally cluster in the same area, but it is fine if they are spread out. Some scenarios spark more varying reactions than others. Invite a different group of five to have a turn for each scenario.

For each scenario, **ASK** the students standing on the grid:

*Why did you choose to stand there? Was this person's intention more to help or hurt, and was the impact hurtful or helpful?* (Take a few minutes to let students explain and debate their positions. It can be especially helpful to ask students who are standing furthest from one another to explain themselves first.)

*What more information could help you better understand the intentions of the person in bold or the impact of his or her actions?* (Have students consider misunderstandings that might have occurred, or holes in the story. What other information could help them assess the intentions of the person in bold and his or her actions?)

*Can you think of a way to make the relationship between/among these people better, or is it okay the way it is?* (Encourage students to think of clearing up miscommunication with clarifying questions or with direct online or offline discussion about the dilemma.)

The answers to all of the scenarios are debatable. **ENCOURAGE** students to have a lively discussion of ethics, reminding them to use the facts of the scenario.

## Wrap Up and Assess

Use the following activity to assess and reinforce students' understanding of the lesson objectives. Have students write two short scenarios about interactions that people have online, one that is very intentional and harmful, and one that is very unintentional and helpful. Students can read their scenarios out loud.

**REVIEW** that the point of the lesson was to have students think about the ethical judgments they make when they engage in relationships online by imagining the point of view and feelings of others. Tell students that it is important to think carefully about how what we post, write, text, or upload might affect the lives of others. Let them know that decisions can harm others whether they are intentional or not. Finish by telling them they have the power to make ethical decisions that are positive and benefit others, promote friendship, and strengthen online community, and that it is up to them to choose to use that power.



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### Extension Activity

Students come up with their own scenarios about online relationships by writing a short paragraph on a slip of paper. The name of the person whose point of view should be analyzed should be circled. Encourage students to include information in the scenarios that would clue in the reader to the intentions of the person whose name is circled, and the impact of that person's actions on others. Collect all the slips, draw them at random, read them aloud, and have students stand on the grid where they belong.



### Homework

Students create four new Chart It scenarios with their parents. Students bring home the **You Chart It Student Handout** they completed during class. They explain what the axes mean, and create and plot four scenarios – one for each quadrant. The scenarios should illustrate behavior that is hurtful/intentional, hurtful/unintentional, helpful/intentional, and helpful/unintentional.

### Alignment with Standards — National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007):

#### 1. Creativity and Innovation

Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology. Students:

- a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
- b. create original works as a means of personal or group expression

#### 4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Students use critical-thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources. Students:

- a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
- b. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

#### 5. Digital Citizenship

Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior. Students:

- a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
- b. exhibit a positive attitude towards using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity

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