





Overall project goal

To develop a guide for building effective curricula that teach children (K-12) the skills for maintaining "Healthy Relationships" in media and online environments.

Approach to developing the guides

To identify the most effective approaches to addressing these issues, we reviewed the literature that assesses effectiveness of various Internet safety, risk prevention, and social skills curricula. This literature identifies key components of curricula that successfully achieved their goals.

We reviewed several meta-analyses and individual studies that identify elements of effective curricula aiming to teach the skills of interest, including social skills¹⁻² which we use in our Healthy Relationships guide.

1. Focus on the underlying issues

Research shows that effective Internet safety messages address the underlying issues that contribute to many of the known risky and anti-social behaviors on the Internet,¹ rather than simply telling children to avoid problematic behaviors. Once those issues are identified, research recommendations indicate the importance of helping children build the skills and competencies they need to address those issues. For example, children who struggle with interacting in positive ways online due to difficulty managing their anger can learn anger management techniques, rather than simply being told to be nice.

2. Define the Program Logic¹

Reviewers recommend defining "the research-based link between the problem, intervention, and prevention or reduction of the problem."¹ They offer an example of such program logic as follows:

"A program targeting cyberbullying might begin by researching risk and causal factors related to bullying and cyberbullying (e.g., anger management problems, social pressure or positive feedback experienced by peers when engaging in bullying behaviors) and develop a program that uses evidence-supported strategies to improve these factors (teaching youth anger-management skills or ways to handle social pressure to 'join in' with negative peer behaviors)...with the expectation that these strategies will reduce cyberbullying behaviors and increase positive bystander behaviors."¹

For this curriculum guide, the associated introduction outlines the program logic. That is, it aims to identify the problem, outline the dynamics of the problem (i.e., understand what might cause it and where intervention might help), and identify research-supported prevention strategies to help address the problem.¹

3. Incorporate research-supported educational and prevention strategies¹

The literature on risk prevention and social skills building³ indicates that effective curricula can be described as:

Sequenced: They break down complex skills into steps and help youth connect them **A**ctive: They provide basic instruction in a skill and then provide an opportunity to practice it

Focused: They devote specific and sufficient time, effort, and attention to instruction Explicit: They clearly identify and share the skills that youth are expected to learn

The curriculum guide aims to incorporate all four of these attributes.

4. Evaluate outcomes

To determine whether the curriculum was effective overall, evaluation must be developed alongside the curriculum. ¹ Such evaluation may include surveys completed by students, teachers, and parents before and after the complete curriculum is administered. Evaluators may also engage a control group, either in another classroom within the same school (if piloted in one classroom) or in another school (if it will be implemented in an entire school). The control group would take the same surveys at the same time points but would not use the curriculum, and outcomes would be compared.

For all classrooms where the curricula are used, in-class assessment will be necessary to determine whether students achieve the learning goals of each lesson. These assessments will need to be developed alongside the fleshed out curriculum as well; however, we have included assessment strategies for teachers for each lesson.

Approach to developing example activities

Research identified several effective strategies for achieving the goals in our activities. We incorporated those strategies into activity development.

Role-playing: Role-playing is found to be an effective means of practicing skills.¹ For role-plays, we use training examples taken directly from the students' learning environment, which can help students generalize their learning into other parts of their lives.⁵

Focus on situations that students may encounter now: In order to translate most effectively to everyday life, role-plays should focus on situations that the children engaging in them are likely to encounter now, as opposed to those they may encounter several years in the future. Children under the age of 10 typically do not use social media, and there's little evidence that teaching them directly about social media at this age will translate into behavior when they are on social media years later.¹ Thus, the lessons geared toward this age group focus not on social media or on direct online interaction but rather on in-person (but often still media-related) situations. Role-plays for children older than 10 incorporate more elements of online interaction.

Bibliotherapy: Many of our activities use books as tools to help youth work through complex social and emotional issues, such as bullying,^{6,7} social anxiety,⁸ and aggression.⁹ Specifically, bibliotherapy helps by presenting readers with literature (fiction or non-fiction) that may resemble their real-world problems. By following the characters and analyzing the scenarios within the literature, the reader can gain insight into their own problems. Bibliotherapy can be a collaborative effort, allowing teachers, school counselors, librarians, and administrators to "evaluate student writings and note personal, academic, social, and behavior areas that need to be addressed."¹⁰

Maintaining Healthy Relationships while Using Digital Media

As outlined in the BEaPRO[™] curriculum, "Digital Media are excellent tools for forging and maintaining healthy social relationships. As with all tools, how we use them determines whether they provide positive opportunities or expose us to risk. Media can either enhance relationships, supporting positive growth, or put users at risk." The goal of the "Maintaining Healthy Relationships Curriculum Guide" is to encourage the development of a curriculum that guides children through building the skills they need to use media in ways that support healthy relationships.

Program Logic

As recommended by the research, ¹ we aim to identify the problem, outline the dynamics of the problem (i.e., understand what might cause it and where intervention might help), and identify research-based prevention strategies to help address the problem.

Problem: Although online interactions can support and enhance relationships, they also have unique features that can negatively affect relationships in particular ways:

- **Perceived anonymity** disconnects behavior from consequences (e.g., seeing another child start to cry) and thus may allow them to behave more aggressively and say more hurtful things to others.^{11,12}
- Endless replicability and "stickiness" of images and text online mean that, even if they post something that they'd like to take back, it may already have spread to other people and can't be deleted.

Children are engaging online but may not have the knowledge or skills to do so in ways that benefit and don't harm their relationships. Thus, concern has emerged about how children manage relationships in that space.¹³ They may use it as a place where they can vent frustration or engage in confusing or difficult behaviors that they've witnessed or experienced elsewhere, as they do in offline contexts, but such behaviors online—whether cyberbullying or simply making mean comments—may have more far-reaching consequences for their relationships.

Dynamics of the problem: There is evidence¹⁴ that children behave aggressively, both online and offline, as a way to express difficult emotions, such as anger, whether related or unrelated to the specific interaction in which they express it.

Prevention strategies to address the problem: Evidence¹⁴ suggests that learning strategies for managing emotions, both online and offline, can help address the underlying problem. Being able to use these strategies effectively, as well as understanding that their behaviors may be hurtful to others, can support children in behaving in ways that more successfully support relationship health.

One of the skills that has been identified as important in a social skills curriculum shown to be effective with elementary school students is how to "work out strong feelings." ¹⁵ Thus, for the purposes of this curriculum, we are focusing our overall approach on teaching the skills to manage negative emotions, such as anger, online and offline.

Note that, although many curricula focus on teaching children that the internet can never be fully anonymous and that their behavior does have consequences, with the assumption that

that knowledge will change their behavior, that approach does not address their underlying reasons for behaving in those ways. Our aim with this curriculum is to address the issues that drive these behaviors and thus alter the root cause, which could have positive affects in many parts of their lives.

			LESSO	N	
Grade Level	Explicit learning goals for lesson (what students will learn)	Philosophy (Why we chose these goals; How we envision the interventions and messages resulting in program objectives)	Sample Activity 1 (Instruct on skills)	Sample Activity 2 (Practice skills)	Assessment of student learning
		K-1: Identify anger	and release/express it in construe	ctive ways	
K	Students will be able to identify when they feel angry or frustrated. Students will be able to release anger or frustration in a productive way.	Being able to identify emotions is the first step toward being able to manage them effectively. Once students can identify how they feel, they can practice releasing difficult emotions (such as anger) in productive ways that support healthy relationships. Learning skills for managing anger can help empower the child to manage herself effectively ¹ both in person and online.	Read a story in which a character gets very angry (such as "When Sophie Gets Angry Really, Really Angry"). Lead a discussion about what students feel in their bodies when they feel angry (e.g., heart starts to beat faster, face gets hot, etc.). Ask students what they want to do when they feel angry (e.g., hit something, run really fast, yell at someone, yank the toy away from them). Discuss how those actions might make them and someone else feel. Then talk about some other ways of managing anger so they don't do things that are harmful to relationships.	Model the behaviors that are most effective and supportive of relationships, and have the students act them out with you. Have the students practice calming their bodies down (e.g., take deep breaths, count to 10, walk away). Then role-play situations (e.g., someone makes a mean joke on a child-oriented online community) and have students practice using the learned strategies in the made up situation.	Observe student behavior and see whether they use the techniques when angry; positively reinforce use of the techniques.

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	1	K-1: Identify ange	r and release/express it in construc	tive ways	
1	Students will be able to identify when they feel angry or frustrated. Students will be able to express anger or frustration in a way that is authentic and proactive.	When children express anger in reactive1 ways, such as through bullying or other externalizing behaviors, it can damage relationships. Learning skills for expressing anger authentically but without personal attacks can set the groundwork for deeper, more connected relationships, both in person and online.	Read a story in which a character expresses anger in a reactive waywhere he yells at or insults someone else. Talk about the consequences of that behavior and about what the character could have done differently. Then describe and demonstrate several constructive ways to handle anger.	Once you've identified some other ways to express anger (e.g., breathing deeply to blow your belly up like a balloon, running really fast, punching a pillow, followed by talking, drawing, or otherwise expressing "I'm angry"), practice that in role-plays about mean comments on the playground or online. Come up with short phrases representing these strategies and create a poster about them. Support students in referring to the poster for ideas when they feel angry.	Observe student behavior and see whether they use the techniques when angry; positively reinforce use of the techniques.

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		2-3: Empathize with oth	ners and understand how they mi	ght be feeling	
2	Students will be able to understand how others might feel when someone is treats them unkindly. Students will be able to use empathy to help them make decisions about how to express their anger.	At times, unkind behaviors are partly driven by the fact that students don't understand the impact of their actions on other people, and it is possible to teach children to understand other people's feelings.2 This lesson aims to help children understand how their online and offline behaviors might affect other people, and to use that understanding to inform their decisions about how to act. Children engage with other people's perspectives and practice "walking in someone else's shoes."	Read a story in which someone is treated unkindly because he is different and where another character works to include that person (such as "Big Al and Shrimpy" by Andrew Clements). Talk about how the characters are behaving and ask students why they might be treating that character in such a way. Discuss alternatives.	Act out scenarios that build awareness of other points of view. For example, have students tie their shoes with only one hand to get an idea of the challenges of having only one hand; have them walk around with blindfolds to get an idea of what it might be like not to be able to see. Follow up with a conversation about what the experience felt like and how it changes their understanding of people who are different than they are. Then talk about kind ways of asking about differences online.	Students draw or write about their experiences, and reflect on them in discussion.

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		2-3: Empathize with oth	ners and understand how they mi	ght be feeling	
3	Students will be able to understand how others might feel when someone treats them unkindly. Students will be able to use empathy to help them make decisions about how to express their anger.	At this stage, children can engage more deeply with other people's perspectives. Unkind behavior is often directed toward children who are "different" in some way; by building an awareness of other people's experiences, students can reduce the fear and unfamiliarity that can serve as one driver for unkind behavior, offline and online.	Read a story about someone who struggles because she's different and that models curiosity rather than criticism.	Look at a YouTube video where someone talks about what it's like to be different, and look at the comments that others write. Are any of them mean? Why? How might that make the person posting feel? What's another way to engage with the person who made the video? Practice re-framing a critical question ("Why would you do that?") as a curious question ("What is it like for you to experience this?").	Students read a few additional question and flip them from critical to curious.

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		4-5: Mai	nage anger and be an upstander		
4	Students will be able to manage their angry feelings through constructive behaviors rather than imitating negative behaviors they see in media.	Children of this age are typically exposed to a wider range of media content depicting a broader range of negative behaviors. They may hear stories from older siblings or other children that make hurtful behavior seem normal or acceptable. This lesson emphasizes choosing constructive behaviors over destructive behaviors, ¹ both offline and online.	Read a story in which a character sees someone older handle a situation poorly and then does the same thing and gets in trouble. Discuss ways to seek and emulate positive role models.	Practice identifying positive and negative behaviors and then trying the positive ones for yourself.	Observe student behavior and see whether they manage anger using constructive techniques; positively reinforce use of the techniques.

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	-	4-5: Manage	e anger and be an upstander		
5	Students will be able to manage their angry feelings through constructive behaviors rather than modeling negative behaviors they see in media. Students will be able to use empathy to understand how someone else might be feeling when they are being treated unkindly, and then intervene.	Children of this age are typically exposed to a wider range of media content depicting a broader range of negative behaviors. They may hear stories from older siblings or other children that make hurtful behavior seem normal or acceptable. This lesson emphasizes choosing constructive behaviors over destructive behaviors, ¹ both offline and online.	Read a story that includes hurtful online behavior (such as "Bully" by Patricia Polacco). Discuss what each of the people in the situation might be feeling; how can the people who are being hurtful manage their emotions more effectively? How can the person who is being treated badly manage the situation? What about those who are witnessing it but aren't directly involved?	Role-play a situation in which students stand up for each other. Then transfer those skills into written form; have students draft constructive responses to mean comments online (e.g., "That's not a very nice thing to say," "I love how kind this person is to others").	Students add to an ongoing list of constructive responses, with their initials, and comment on at least 2 of their classmates' responses on sticky notes (with initials) indicating why the comment is constructive or suggesting a way to improve it.

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		6-8: Communicate eff	ectively offline and online wh	en angry	
6	Students will be able to communicate effectively offline and online when angry.	Young adolescents can learn to manage their angry feelings and aggressive behavior by substituting prosocial behavior. ³ This lesson focuses on teaching prosocial behavior to replace potential antisocial behaviors, both offline and online, that can otherwise result from angry feelings.	Talk about how easy it is to push 'send' when you're angryand how difficult it is to take something back once you've sent it . View and discuss a movie clip that demonstrates this. Talk about ways to slow down the process (e.g., when angry, take 10 deep breaths before sending or saying anything) and create space for constructive interaction.	Practice seeing an angry text or post and using the strategies to calm down before deciding how to handle it. Practice taking 10 deep breaths (and see how long that takes) and then re-visiting the question of how to handle the situation.	Students collect positive and negative posts and bring in stories of how they handled situations in their out of school lives.

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	_	6-8: Communicate effe	ectively offline and online whe	en angry	
7	Students will be able to communicate effectively offline and online when angry.	Different modes of communication (both offline and online) are optimal for different purposes, but tweens sometimes use these modes interchangeably, even when one mode would be more effective than another. Learning how to determine which mode of communication might be most effective can help tweens de- escalate rather than escalate conflict.	Talk about how difficult it can be to read tone in written form and what sorts of problems that might cause. Ask whether students have even been misunderstood in text, or if they have misunderstood someone else. Discuss what might have helped clarify the communication.	Write sample text messages on the board (e.g., "That's so cool", "Whatever", "I'm so mad at you") and have students read them aloud in different tones of voice (e.g., angry, sarcastic, friendly). How can they better communicate what they mean?	Students create a public service announcement about tone in writing and when to use text vs. in-person conversation vs. phone calls.

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	•	6-8: Communicate eff	ectively offline and online wh	en angry	
8	Students will be able to communicate effectively offline and online when angry.	When young people perceive that they are anonymous online, their hurtful or cyberbullying behaviors tend to increase.4, 5 Practicing taking on other people's perspectives can help reduce adolescents' hurtful behaviors.6 To support them in managing anger in relationship-supporting ways, therefore, this lesson emphasizes the lack of true anonymity and, more importantly, the fact that behaviors have real effects on people even if you don't see those effects directly.	Discuss perceived anonymity and how it might affect student behavior. Then talk about the effects that hurtful comments have on them even when the comments have no name attached. Think of a situation when learning who was "behind the curtain" changed how you felt about what you said or did (or watch a movie clip where a revealed identity changes everything). Discuss how you or the character might behave differently if identifiable.	Give students a challenging question to answer as a Tweet from an anonymous accountand then to revise the Tweet as they would if they had to use their own account. What are the similarities? What are the differences?	Students create slogans about how to support relationships online.

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		9-12: Identify and de-	escalate aggressive behavior offlir	ne and online	
9	Students will be able to interact in constructive ways on social media even while feeling angry.	When students are able to have positive interactions offline and online despite negative feelings, their outcomes are better. ³	Lead discussion of how they've seen others (or how they themselves) behave when they feel angry about something someone says on social media. Write down each of those observed behaviors on its own piece of the pages into clusters: the behaviors that might have positive effects on the relationship (e.g., acknowledge how they feel without attacking) and those that may be hurtful or harmful (e.g., attacking through personal insults). Come up with class words for those 2-3 types of responses.	Students are given a scenario where they're incensed over a post they see on social media. They practice writing responses that de-escalate the situation and encourage positive interaction and problem solving.	Students seek situations where they can de- escalate the situation and either bring them in to discuss in class or address and then discuss how they handled it.

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		9-12: Identify and de-	escalate aggressive behavior offlir	e and online	
10	Students will be able to identify and de- escalate aggressive behavior online. Students will be able to identify and de- escalate their own anger online.	Adolescents (and their relationships) benefit when they build skills that enable them to manage how they express anger and facilitate alternative nonaggressive responses to conflict and frustration ⁷ in online and offline contexts.	Lead discussion of how they've seen others (or how they themselves) behave when they feel angry about something someone says on social media. Discuss possible ways of handling these comments or interactions. Create possible pro-social ways to address challenging situations.	Practice using nonaggressive responses to online conflict through roleplaying in the classroom setting. List responses to enraging situations that may diffuse conflict including not responding right away, discussing the issue in person, or writing responses online that do not engage with aggressive behaviors.	Students seek situations where they can de- escalate the situation and either bring them in to discuss in class or address and then discuss how they handled it.

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		9-12: Identify and de-	escalate aggressive behavior offlin	e and online	
11	Students will be able to identify and de- escalate aggressive behavior online. Students will be able to identify and de- escalate their own anger online.	One way to reduce aggressive behaviors both online and offline among adolescents is for them to continue practicing taking on other people's perspectives. ⁶	What new social media are there now? How do students see others using them? What great strategies have they seen for de-escalating conflict? Write them down and work together to understand what works and what doesn't.	Looking at these lists, generate ideas for ways to de-escalate online situations. Identify and practice conflict resolution skills in written conversation (projected so everyone can see and discuss).	Students seek situations where they can de- escalate the situation and either bring them in to discuss in class or address and then discuss how they handled it.

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9-12: Identify and de-escalate aggressive behavior offline and online					
12	Students will be able to identify and de- escalate aggressive behavior online. Students will be able to identify and de- escalate their own anger online.	One way to reduce aggressive behaviors both online and offline among adolescents is for them to continue practicing taking on other people's perspectives. ⁶	Practice changing the rules of an interaction online. Starting with an aggressive example, write down how the person expects you to react (e.g., by yelling insults back), and demonstrate methods of changing the rules (e.g., not engaging at all, staying calm and disengaged).	Practice conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies in Tweet and other social media forms.	Students seek situations where they can de- escalate the situation and either bring them in to discuss in class or address and then discuss how they handled it.

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