

Educator Guide

The evaluation tool may be used independently by students to consider sources of mental health content they interact with online. The fictional examples below may also be used to introduce the tool and open a conversation about critically evaluating online mental health content.

Instructions:

1. Share the examples provided with students.
2. Invite students to use the evaluation tool to consider the sources offered in the examples. Follow up with these reflection questions:
 - Do you notice anything that would make you **proceed with caution** and **think critically** about the mental health information?
 - Do you notice anything that would encourage you to **continue exploring** the source?
 - Which of the three options would you **rely on** most for mental health information?
3. Invite students to share their observations and thoughts. The discussion chart below contains additional information for your reference. Encourage students to use the tool and come to their own decisions.

Note: the purpose of this activity is to help encourage critical thinking and empower students to make informed decisions as they engage with content, both now and in the future. Avoid making judgements about online sources of mental health content (which are constantly changing), or dismissing entire categories of content (e.g., social media). It's also important for students to consider the purpose of the mental health information. Students may be most discerning when seeking information to support their own mental health decisions, versus when they are looking to be entertained, inspired, or find a connection.



Discussion notes:

| EXAMPLE 1 | EXAMPLE 2 | EXAMPLE 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>While watching videos online you come across a channel about mental health that inspires you. The creator shares that they have been diagnosed with a mental illness and they want to try to help others. They share their personal story and what worked for them, in the hope it will help everyone experiencing the same issue. At times, the creator shares personal information and is tearful and upset. You feel worried about them and hope they are doing okay.</p> | <p>A friend tells you about a website and a related social media account managed by a diverse group of high school students who blog and post about mental health. The site explains that the students work with a team of educators and mental health professionals. They don't claim to offer mental health counselling or treatment and links are provided for anyone who might need support. The blog posts are about how to start a conversation about mental health with your parents/caregivers, when to seek support, and other topics that interest you. The related social media account catches your attention and has a fun, encouraging vibe.</p> | <p>On a social media app, some videos about mental health show up in your feed. The videos are funny and energetic. The creator has a degree related to mental health. They strongly promote going to the gym as a mental health strategy and describe it as "their therapy." They encourage everyone who sees their videos to try the same strategy and they even offer discount links to buy memberships at a national fitness chain.</p> |
| WHAT? | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts content that decreases stigma. • Offers one experience and perspective (which may be different from other people's/students' experiences). • No information about where to go if students need more support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is helpful and could support mental health learning. • Site clearly indicates its purpose and limits. • Provides links to more resources and support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers a quick, one-size-fits-all fix to a complex issue. Doesn't recognize other points of view or experiences. Physical activity is one mental health strategy that may not work for everyone or in every situation. • No information about where to go if students need more than the strategy shared. |
| WHO? | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator has personal experience with mental illness but does not mention any training or education that might position them to guide others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are supported by educators and mental health professionals with appropriate training to offer mental health information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator has training/education in mental health and well-being. |
| IS IT FOR ME? | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos are inspiring. Content is engaging and helps users understand another perspective. • Content is sometimes upsetting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts are engaging and offer helpful information. • Students involved are from a variety of backgrounds and many perspectives are reflected. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos are fun and engaging. • Creator is trying to sell something. |
| DECISION? | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This information might not guide students' personal decisions about mental health. They might engage with the content for inspiration or to be supportive and better understand another person's perspective, not for mental health information specific to their own needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might decide this could be one of their go-to sources for mental health information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might watch the videos for entertainment but not for mental health information. |

