

Characters and their problems

Teacher's notes: Pupils should read through their character's problem together and have a discussion in their groups. Teachers can use the points below to support and structure discussions.



Amy

I don't spend too much time online – about four hours in the evening. But added to this, I'm finding myself online late at night. I access the internet through my phone – my parents don't know about it but I know that they are worried about me particularly since I have exams going up and don't have the energy to revise properly. I spend a lot of my time helping out on the forum of my favourite band. I feel good when I am online there's an area for people to talk about their problems. I feel like I can handle most of the problems people have but there are a few problems that really scare me and I feel a bit out of my depth. I've been using some online counselling sites to get advice to give on the forum but I'm really scared I might say the wrong thing. It's getting to the point where I can't leave the website alone. I know that I need to take a rest but I'm worried about leaving the conversation and what the people might do. If anything bad happened it would be my fault.

Teacher's notes:

Possible discussion points include

- Advantages- an excellent way of helping others? Develops interpersonal skills?
- Use of forums- what is a forum? Why do young people use them?
- Impact on emotional and physical wellbeing- using the internet late at night? Impact on others?
- Appropriate use- what about time limits? How to organise time for revision?
- Seeking counselling- online services? Services available in school?
- Communication- how can the issue be approached with parents and carers?

Omar

My name is Omar. Most of the time I spend online is on social networking sites. I use a lot of the apps and probably update my status more than all of my mates! I've had a social networking site since I was pretty young so there are loads of people on my profile. I try and keep up to date with the changes in privacy settings so I feel like I am in control. One of the main things I do online is update my friends about the music I like. I've met loads of new people through this. Recently I've been having some pretty intense chats with a girl I've met through a new singer I've got interested in. We've been chatting for ages, I've checked out her profile and she seems normal! I've just got that thing in the back of my mind still where anyone can be anyone online and there was a case in one of the other schools in the area where a lad ended up being blackmailed by some bloke over the internet after he sent photos to a "girl". Is there anything else I should do to make sure I'm not putting myself in a dodgy situation? I'm not sure how I feel about talking to my parents about this one they only use the internet for email.

Teacher's notes:

Possible discussion points include

- Advantages- an excellent way of sharing interests and hobbies with others?
- Good online behaviour- changing your privacy settings regularly!
- Behaviour on social networking sites- can you trust who you are speaking to? How can you stay in control? See www.digizen.org and www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- With KS4 students, a discussion about sexting might be relevant
- Communication- how to approach the issue with a trusted adult/ carer/parent?
- Seeking counselling- online services? Services available in school?



Jono

My name is Jono and I need some help. I feel as if I am getting out of control. I regularly game online and have a group of mates I game with. In the past, all of the conversations were about the game – strategy mainly and I've always had good experiences. The new game that I play is a pretty violent one and really I'm too young to play it. I've noticed that as we've got further into the game, everything is changing- it's all a bit intense. Some of the players are pretty aggressive and threaten other players. I use a headset for the game so everything feels really real. I play the game so often that when I go to sleep I can still see the images from the game in my head. Everyone wants to do their best and I want to try and keep up with everyone on the game – this means playing for as many hours as possible ...or purchasing credits. I've used up all of my own money and my older brother has let me use his credit card to buy more. He only meant for me to use it once but I have taken the card a few times more. I'm scared, he's going to kill me when he gets the bill through. When you're spending online, you don't notice how much you're spending. What can I do?

Teacher's notes:

Possible discussion points include

- Advantages- good for socialising with like minded people? What can gaming strategies teach us?
- Appropriate use- games do have age ratings, why is it important to follow these? See www.pegi.info for more information.
- Gaming- where should you report inappropriate behaviour to- for example, gaming providers by using a 'report abuse' button,?
- Seeking counselling- online services such as www.thinkuknow.co.uk or www.childline.org.uk ? Services available in school?
- Online addiction- how can we limit the time we spend online? What measures can be put into place to ensure sensible use?
- Communication- how can the issue be approached with parents and carers?