

# The impact of online influencers and misogyny (11-15 year olds)



Classroom activity

## Summary:

This is a longer activity, which will allow students to work individually and in groups. Students are given a series of statements to read through. They will discuss what advice and guidance they would give the person in the statement. After this discussion, students then have the opportunity to do an extended piece of writing. Teachers have the option to do this on computers if that is more suitable for their students. This task could be used in Citizenship, PSHE (lesson or drop down day), form time / registration or English.

## Learning objectives:

- At the end of the lesson students should be able to understand the impact that online influencers and misogyny can have on an individual.
- Students should feel more confident to ask questions about online influencers and know where to get support.

## Duration:

45-60 minutes

## Age group:

Secondary: Years 7-10

## Materials required:

- Printouts of statements for each group
- Paper and pens for individual and group notes
- Post-it notes for the safe-space agreement
- Computers (optional)

## Instructions:

### Step 1: Introduce the lesson objectives (3-5 mins)

- To explore the impact that online influencers and misogyny (hatred of women, or the belief that men are much better than women) can have on an individual and for the students to consider how they would offer support and guidance to this person.
- To discuss in groups, give whole class feedback and complete a letter writing task.

### Step 2: Establish a safe space agreement (5-10 mins)

- Give each student a post-it note and ask them to write down one agreement or rule for the session which they will then place on the board and explain their agreement.
- Ensure they have included; respectful listening, confidentiality, empathy, recognition of others' experiences and participation.

### Step 3: The activity (15-30 mins)

- Split the students into groups (ideally, no bigger than groups of three to enable a meaningful discussion), give each group a statement (see below) and ask them to designate a team spokesperson, scribe and reader for the group.
- Ask students to read through the statement and make notes, including; key points, concerns about the person in the statement, how the situation might make the person feel and what guidance they would give to the person in the statement.
- Ask 'the reader' to read out the group's statement and the team spokesperson to feedback their findings. Discuss as a class and ask other groups for their thoughts.

### Step 4: Optional extension

- Ask students to write a short message of support to the person in the statement. If you want to increase accessibility or creativity this could be done on a computer, written as a comic strip or even written and acted out as a dialogue or role play. You may wish to provide students with sentence starters to support them in writing their message of support, for example:

*I wanted to reach out to you because...*

*It's okay to feel confused by what you see online but remember...*

*If what you see online makes you feel bad you can...*





**Questions for teachers:** Can you think of some other ways that a person might be successful? How do people present themselves and their lives online, and why? Do you think this always represents reality?



"I've been reading a lot lately. I came across a book by this man that I saw on TV. He did an interview and talked about the roles of men and women in society. I wasn't sure at first, but the more I read about his ideas, the more it makes sense. I feel sorry for him because he's only saying what seems to be happening. Men can't seem to do anything right anymore. We're getting accused of sexism and harassing women all the time, so I don't know how to act now without being told I'm doing something wrong. Women make stuff up all the time and I reckon men are being blamed for things just a few men do, but I wouldn't do these things. Why can't we just let this man speak the truth?"

**Mo, 18**

**Teachers' sample response:** It is important that we have the freedom to read about and listen to people who we find interesting and can relate to. However, there is a lot of misinformation online, so it is really important that you fact check the information that you read and check the sources of information to ensure that they can be trusted.

**Questions for teachers:** Do you think any of the messages in this statement are harmful? Who are they harmful to? Would it be appropriate for someone to take these beliefs into their adult relationships, into their job as a police officer, doctor or politician, or into jury service? What would the impact be? What evidence is there for the claim that women make stuff up all the time?



"I'm feeling really isolated. I wanted to get some advice about working out and came across this forum. It seemed fine at first and I told people on the page that I wanted to "bulk up". There were some supportive people on there and I felt confident that I would get some great tips. But then suddenly when I started talking more about how low I was feeling, they started putting me down, telling me I was worthless and deserved to feel like that. That I should just "man up"."

**Zach, 16**

**Teachers' sample response:** It's really important to know that people online don't necessarily want what's best for you, and some don't act in a safe way. There are some harmful chat rooms that encourage young people to feel down about themselves and to harm themselves. If you find yourself in one of these situations, it's important to leave immediately, shut them off and tell a trusted adult. Such chat groups can seriously harm you and your mental health.

**Questions for teachers:** What advice would you give a friend if you thought they were at risk on a chat site? Who could you go to to say that you are worried? What does the phrase 'man up' mean to you - is it negative or positive?



“I’ve been going out with Jake for months now. He was so nice at first and we used to hang out all the time. He made me laugh so much! Over the past few weeks his behaviour has started to change. He used to be so sweet and kind to me but recently he’s started being really horrible to me, not letting me speak when we’re together and trying to dominate all the time. He’s grown distant and is spending a lot of time online.”

**Mollie, 17**

**Teachers’ sample response:** It can be really hard when someone you know and care about is acting differently to how they usually do. It’s important to know that his behaviour change is not your fault and you are not responsible for his behaviour towards you. Find someone that you can trust (teacher, older sibling, relative) and let them know your concerns. You are doing the right thing by telling someone and you’re not getting Jake into trouble. They will be able to get Jake the help that he needs. It is important that you also protect yourself in this situation and get the support that you need.

**Questions for teachers:** What behaviours do you think may be concerning in this statement? Who would you speak to if you were concerned about someone you knew? What do you think a healthy relationship looks like? What are the potential indicators for an abusive relationship?

