

Online Identity (Young People)

There's a lot of talk in the news at the moment about young people and social media. It's a topic that is very relevant to KRen in the play. We see that KRen's online identity is both helpful and unhelpful to her and how she feels about being in hospital.



What do we mean when we talk about online identity?: Online identity means the version of ourselves we present on the internet. An online identity is often made up of lots of different types of platforms and media, all that represent us in different ways. For example: A playlist, a gaming avatar, videos on TikTok.

The Positives: Our online identity can help us connect with lots of things that make up our offline identity, such as finding people with similar interests, building confidence and learning new skills.

For disabled young people, online spaces may be particularly important. It may be one of the few places they meet others with health conditions, or follow content creators who talk about living with disability.

The Negatives: Unfortunately, there are many negatives to relying on our online identity too. Seeing someone's online identity doesn't give us the full picture of their lives. This can often lead to us making assumptions and unhealthy comparisons with others.

Spending too much time online can be draining. You might find yourself scrolling for no reason when you have free time.

When we share our lives online, it can feel quite vulnerable. Platforms often work on a 'likes' based system. These can make us question things we share. Everyone is different and if someone makes a negative comment about something you like it may affect how you think about it. Unlike in-person experiences, people may be more likely to say things without thinking about the consequences and impact on the person.

Balance: Like most things, it's really important to find balance. If you feel like you're spending too much time online. Here are some alternatives you might like to consider:

- If you find yourself scrolling for no reason - ask yourself 'am I looking for something in particular? Or am I just bored?'
- Set up timers for your social media apps. Some phones have this function. Or, sign out of your apps.
- Reconnect with activities you enjoy off screen - reading, sports, going for a walk.
- Spend time with friends.

Sources:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/helping-young-people-manage-their-online-identity/>

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/young-peoples-digital-lives-and-well-being>