

The Social Dilemma: Breakdown and Discussion Questions

Lesson 1: 0:00-6:00

Disclaimer:

- Someone almost says “load of shit,” but it gets cut off before you hear it
- Newscaster mentions “Killed people”
- White supremacy
- Some violent images (news clips)

About:

- This section is an introduction to the film and it expresses some concerns about potential issues regarding social media.

Discussion Questions Before You Watch the Clip:

- What do you know about social media?
- How many of you use social media? How often?

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Why do you think everyone is so nervous about doing these interviews?
- Why do you think only former employees from tech companies are participating in these interviews?
- What stood out to you?
- They mentioned that these tools were created for positive purposes, what are some of those purposes? What are some bad sides?

Lesson 2: 6:00- 10:35

Words To Define For Your Students Before Watching the Clip:

Cacophony, a harsh discordant mixture of sounds.

About:

- Tristan Harris, tech guru, practices his speech about social media.
- Is anyone talking about email being addictive? A presentation was shared with Google about how email had become addictive and everyone agreed, however, it was ignored.
- A small group of people (50 white men in California) are making decisions that impact 2 billion people.

Discussion Questions Before You Watch the Clip:

- Can you think of any problems that the tech industry/social media companies create?

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Why do you think it is important for everyone to know about these issues, not just the tech companies?
- Why do you think the presentation was ignored even though everyone at Google realized it was a problem?
- What are the problems with 50 white men in California creating something that two billion people around the world are going to use?

Lesson 3: 10:35- 16:23

Words To Define For Your Students Before Watching the Clip:

- Monetize, to earn revenue from something

About:

- The business model, how Facebook makes money through advertisements
- Selling their users to advertisers. "If you aren't paying for the product, you are the product."
- Social media apps are competing for your attention. How much of your life can we get you to look at your screen?
- Internet companies are the richest companies to ever exist.

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Social media companies are selling their users; we are the thing being sold. Our attention is the product. How does that make you feel?
- How does it make you feel that social media is designed to get you to spend as much time as possible on your phone?
- Internet companies are the richest companies in the history of humanity, why?
- Do you agree that social media gradually changes your behaviour?
- Do you think that social media intends to change people's behaviour?

Lesson 4: 16:23- 22:05

Words To Define For Your Students Before Watching the Clip:

Algorithm - Social media algorithms are a way of sorting posts in a users' feed based on relevancy instead of publishing time. Social networks prioritize which content a user sees in their feed first by the likelihood that they'll actually want to see it.

About:

- Everything you do online is tracked, kept, measured, and recorded. Example: Social media apps keep monitoring how long you engage with different posts.
- The programs evolve the more you use them and will eventually be able to predict your actions.
- The tricks they use to keep you looking at your screen.

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Did you know that social media companies keep track of how long you view or interact with a post?
- Everything you do is being watched. How does it feel to learn that these companies know so much about you?
- These programs are no longer being run by people. Someone designed the program and now it predicts what you will do and who you will become on its own. What do you think about the fact that computers are deciding what you see on social media?

Lesson 5: 22:05- 29:46

Disclaimer:

- Someone says “hell”
- Eggplant Emoji, it’s subtle but any students that understand its implication will most likely pick up on it.

Words To Define For Your Students Before Watching the Clip:

Persuasive, good at persuading someone to do or believe something through reasoning or the use of temptation.

About:

- The psychology of persuasion in regards to technology
- Positive intermittent reinforcement in regards to social media
- The unconscious habits formed when using social media. This effect is by design.
- Tech companies got more people to vote in elections through algorithms.

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- How do you feel about tech companies making their products more persuasive and creating unconscious habits?
- Why don't your notifications have a photo with them? You must open the app to see it. Have you ever noticed that before?
- Social media convinced people to vote. What else can tech companies get you to do if they can get you to vote?

Lesson 6: 29:46- 37:47

About:

- If something is a tool, it is something that you use and command. If it’s not a tool, it commands your attention.
- Addiction and manipulation; technology is not a tool.
- There are only two industries that call their customers ‘users’: illegal drugs and tech companies.

Discussion Questions Before You Watch the Clip:

- Is social media a tool?

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Have you ever experienced social media as manipulative?
- One tech guy had to write his own software to break his addiction to something he helped create. Thoughts?
- Do you think you could put your phone down for a day? A week? A month?

Lesson 7: 37:47- 43:52

Disclaimer:

- This entire section discusses **self-harm, suicide, mental health**, and the impact social media has had on those issues.

About:

- Social media wasn't designed with children in mind.
- Rising self-harm and suicide rates in girls since the introduction of social media (US Stats).

Discussion To Have Before You Watch the Clip:

- This section can be very triggering for some students. Allow students to leave the room if they need to.
- Encourage your students to seek help if they are struggling with mental health
- Text HOME to 686868 in Canada to text with a trained Crisis Responder (this is a free service, open 24/7)

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- What kind of pressure do you think social media puts on us to be perfect?
- Why do you think the rates of self-harm and suicide are up so high?
- When we are lonely or having a hard time, a lot of us turn to social media to distract ourselves. What do you think this is doing to us as people?

Lesson 8: 43:52-53:15

About:

- Tech is changing faster than anything we've seen in history
- AI
- Loss of control over algorithms

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- How do you think the rapid change of technology impacts us?
- Have we lost control over these systems?
- What in the world attracts your attention? What do you think your phone does to get your attention?

Lesson 9: 53:15- 1:00:56

Words To Define For Your Students Before Watching The Clip:

- Polarization, the division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.
- Propaganda, information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

About:

- Your social media feeds are specific to you.
- You are shown true or false information based on your location and your interests. This is why we see radical differences in people's views.

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Google auto fills are different depending on where you live. Why do you think this is?
- What are some consequences of people receiving information that is uniquely tailored to them?

Lesson 10: 1:00:56- 1:06:41

Disclaimer:

- Pizza gate, ordering a trafficked person
- Talks about a man with a gun, doesn't show the gun
- Mentions cocaine
- Says "shit"
- Some violent images, protests

About:

- Fake news spreads 6x faster than true news on Twitter.
- Facebook can't regulate what is real and what's not.

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- How do you feel about this clip?
- What do you think should be done to address fake news on social media?

Section Omitted: - 1:06:41- 1:21:27

We chose not to include this section as we didn't want to scare the students

Lesson 11: 1:21:27- 1:29:16

About:

- It's not all bad; social media has some positive features.
- The Facebook "like" button was created to spread positivity.
- Will there ever be a time without social media now that it's here?
- As humans, we have a responsibility to make a change.
- We can demand that these products are made humanely and that we are not treated as a resource.

Discussion Questions Before You Watch the Clip:

- What are the good aspects of social media?

Discussion Questions After You Watch the Clip:

- Do you think there will be another technology that displaces social media? What might that be?
- Do you think there needs to be more regulation on social media?
- Do you think you've changed your thinking or that you'll change how you use social media since we started watching The Social Dilemma?