

Oops! I Broadcast It on the Internet

Brittney's Story

1. Why do you think Brittney and her friends wanted to broadcast themselves in the first place?
2. Brittney regrets posting the photos, but are there situations when you think it would be okay, even helpful, to get comments from others online? What are those situations?
3. In what ways did Brittney's actions impact her later? Can you imagine how the posts may impact Brittney in the future, even beyond college?
4. Is there anything that you learned from Brittney's story that made you think about incidents in your own life or your friends' lives? If so, can you share those stories (leaving out personal details)?

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Emma's Secret Crush Goes Viral

Over the past few weeks, Emma has developed a huge crush on José. She thinks he might like her too. She knows gossip travels like lightning at school, so she tells only her best friend, Chantal, by texting her after school: "Do you think Jose likes me? I kinda have a little crush on him." Emma also swears Chantal to secrecy over the phone later that night. Though Chantal vows to keep her secret, she forwards Emma's text to Zeke, who forwards it to a friend, who...you know the rest! The next day at school one of the soccer players, Ted, texts Emma: "Emma+Jose=so adorable". Emma is shocked and embarrassed because she told only her best friend, and then swore her to secrecy.

1. If you were Emma, what would you do when you got Ted's text? Who, if anyone, is most at fault for spreading Emma's secret?
2. How would this situation be different if Emma had told her friends about the crush in person instead of by sending a text message?
3. How could Emma resolve or fix the situation herself? Is there a way she could make the situation better?
4. Has anyone ever shared information about you or someone you know over IM, text, the Internet, etc. that you wanted to keep private? If so, what did you do?

Tommy has been writing an online blog about his life that he thought was pretty private because he used a user name that wasn't his real name. But when his parents ask him why he decided not to try out for the basketball team, Tommy figures out that they have been reading his blog, because it's the only place he describes being picked on for being so short. Tommy is annoyed and surprised because he never told his parents about the blog and certainly didn't give them his user name to access it. His blog is technically public, but he didn't think anyone could connect his blog with the "real" him. Tommy later finds out that his best friend's parents told his parents about the blog.

1. What would you say, if anything, to your parents if you were Tommy? (Guide students to consider the various consequences of making information public. Specifically, students should know that such information can be searched; copied and passed on; seen by a large, invisible audience, and can be persistent or even permanent.)
2. How is Tommy's parents' reading his blog similar to or different from reading a diary that he's written in a notebook or paper journal?
3. Do you think it's fair for Tommy's parents to read the things he posts on the Internet, given that his blog is technically public? Why or why not?
4. Why might Tommy's parents want to read his blog? Given these reasons, how would you react if your parents asked to read your email or text messages?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where your parents or someone else has asked to read something that you felt was private? If so, how did you feel? What did you do?