

SOCIAL MEDIA & VIOLENCE

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROFESSIONALS IN PHILADELPHIA

It's complicated.

Good, bad, and unknown

Social media offers connection, community-building, common experiences, comedy, & conversation. It is a source of support.

But things can take a turn for the worse. In a time when **your reputation as a young person is often determined by your social media presence**, "if you take an L, you could become famous."

When validation is counted by number of followers or likes - and when **"eyes are on you"** - young people may feel the need to save face, which perpetuates conflict & sparks things offline.

Parents & violence prevention professionals see a lot of this, but still they don't see everything that's happening, & even more unclear is what they should do about it.

What's happening on social media?

Who posted it, who's in the know, going viral by filming a fight - "street cred is on social media now" and if someone comes at you, you may be worried about looking like you're backing down.

Self-esteem is developing in young people and they are finding their voice on social media - but what voice are they taking on?

For everything we think we know is happening on social media, there's more we don't. "It's hard to keep up" with slang, which means you can miss or misinterpret a lot.

I don't need your phone number, what's your IG?

There's a generational divide on how social media is used. Young people ask for instagrams, not phone numbers. Adults use it for recipes, DIY videos, and staying connected with family & friends, but how are young people using it? Anonymous accounts can make it even harder to know.

Even after violence, social media plays a role

Getting supportive messages on social media while recovering from a violent injury can help with the mental recovery, and some patients reach for their phone to post "I'm still alive" as a show of strength, but social media can also be host to further threats or mockery.

"They're doing it anyway" - so what can we do?

"The first concrete effort to engage in this avenue of work"

The violence prevention professionals in our focus groups admitted that "not a lot" is done about social media, and that this research is the "first concrete effort" they've been a part of.

For something that's "hard to get your hands around", it's difficult to know where to start, but it's important to be on social media to get to know your clients and be relatable. Some will ask clients what a post is about or will tell them "don't put a target on your back" but said not to treat it like surveillance.