

#DISCONNECTCHALLENGE



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| Ages: | 7 - Adult |
| Duration: | This lesson takes place over two weeks (c. 3 hours of total class time), with an optional media add-on module in the third week (c.2 – 6 additional hours). |
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Overview

In this lesson, children and youth across Alberta will assess how technology and media affect their sense of connection with themselves, other people, and nature. They document their use of networked media (e.g. laptops, tablets, smart phones, social media, other apps) for one week and then embark on a one-week media fast: avoiding social media platforms, nocturnal screen time, technology around the dinner table, Internet browsing (except for schoolwork), texting (save for their parents/guardians), and listening to music with headphones. They then report on their experiences and collaboratively identify what they have learned. Finally, they use what they have learned to create a mindful media use plan. In an optional extension activity, they create a video (or other media product) to share their experiences and reflections with others on the Disconnect Challenge Alberta Facebook group. This Facebook community will be available as a link through the #DisconnectChallenge website (<https://disconnectchallenge.ca/>).

Learning Intentions

Over the course of this activity, students will:

- Reflect on their use of technology and media,
- Analyse how technology and media influence their behaviour,
- Participate in class and home discussions,
- Prepare a detailed action plan, and,
- Create a video or other media product (*optional extension activity*).

Preparation & Materials

Students should be supplied with photocopies of the following handouts:

- Week One Media Use Diary, and,
- Week Two Media Fast Diary.

Students should be supplied with photocopies of the following assignment sheets:

- Post-Challenge Media Plan, and,
- Disconnect Challenge Video (*optional extension activity*).

Prepare to show the following video:

- Social Media Fast – Disconnection Challenge: <https://disconnectchallenge.ca/>

Procedure

Day One

What Role do Technology and Media Play in Our Lives? (30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of three or four students and have each group make a list of all the different ways they use or consume media. Tell them to consider:

- Different devices (phones, laptops, tablets, TVs, etc.),
- Different platforms (social media, games, streaming services, etc.), and,
- Different contexts (listening to music at home vs. hearing it at the mall, etc.).

In the same groups, have students think about what they *do* with media:

- Encourage them to think beyond just the obvious purposes of media (e.g. watching a TV show) to the different *reasons why* they do that (e.g. watching because you're bored; watching because you want to know what happens in the story; watching because everyone else watches and you want to be part of the conversation, etc.).

Have the groups share the results of their discussion with the class and create two master lists based on the shared feedback: a list of all the different *ways* they use or consume media **and** the different *reasons* for doing it.

Introducing #DisconnectChallenge Alberta (10 minutes)

Tell the class that, on a 2014 survey, 35 percent of Canadian students of all ages worried that they spent too much time online.¹ Ask the class the following questions:

- Do you think that number is now the same, lower or higher? Why?
- Do you ever think about how much you use media?
- In past 24 hours, how many devices have you used?
- What would it be like to “disconnect” for a day, a week, a month?

¹ Steeves, V. (2014). YCWW Phase III, Life Online Ottawa: MediaSmarts.

Tell the class that, in 2018, a group of 6 teens in Kingston, Ontario decided they wanted to learn how being constantly connected to devices affected how connected they were with themselves, other people and nature. They decided the best way to do that was to disconnect for a week and keep a diary of their experiences. Here's what they learned [show video].

Over the next two weeks we'll be taking the Disconnect Challenge, along with over ten thousand (10,000) other Alberta children and youth in more than 40 school districts. It's the first province-wide disconnect challenge of its kind in the world!

Distribute the handouts *Week One Media Use Diary*. Go through the assignment sheet with them and explain that over the next week they will be keeping the *Week One Media Use Diary*.

Day Two (one week later)

Reflection (30 minutes)

Share the following questions with the class. Ask the students to individually review their "Week One" diaries and to write a reflection that answers the questions based on their experiences over Week One. Then discuss their answers in class.

- What were the ways that you chose to use media?
- What were some of the ways you used media without choosing to?
- Which activities made you feel closer to other people? To nature?
- Which made you feel more isolated?

Create a list based on the shared feedback: a list of why they used media, what uses made them feel more connected, what uses made them feel less connected/isolated.

Tell the students that, to get a sense of how technology shapes what they do, they'll be joining over ten thousand (10,000) Alberta children and youth and going on a week-long media fast. The idea is to put down their phones and other devices for a whole week (including Family Day on February 17, 2020) and see how it changes how they feel, and what they do. For one week, they'll go without social media, online search engines, message apps, online shows, and listening to music with headphones. They can use technology for the following exceptions:

- Schoolwork,
- Communicating with parents/guardians, employers or coaches when needed,
- Watching shows/movies with someone else,
- Listening to music with someone else (i.e. without headphones), and,
- Emergencies.

Distribute the handout *Week Two Media Fast Diary*. Go through the assignment sheet with them and explain that over the next week they will be keeping the *Week Two Media Fast Diary*.

Day Three (one week later)

Taking Stock of Technology and Media (30 minutes)

Ask the students the following questions:

- What did you do (if anything) to prepare for the Week Two Media Fast?
- What things in your offline life were made easier? Which were more difficult?
- What did you do during the fast that you wouldn't have done if you were using technology that week?
- Did you miss anything? What was it and why?
- What didn't you miss?
- How did it impact your relationships with family or friends?
- Did it get easier or harder to be disconnected as the week went by?

Highlight this quote from one of the participants in the Disconnection Challenge video:

“I think technology does affect how you think and how you socialize with people.”

Ask the whole class:

- Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What are some ways that technology affects how we act?

Evaluation: Post-Challenge Media Plan

Distribute the assignment sheet *Post-Challenge Media Plan* and explain to students that based on their experience with the Media Fast and the class discussion, they will be creating a plan to use media and technology more mindfully in the future. Tell students that a successful plan has three steps:

- 1) *A goal*: in this case, students will consider how they might use technology or media differently based on their experiences and reflections.
- 2) *Possible obstacles*: What are some challenges they think they might face doing that?
- 3) *Strategies*: What could they do to deal with those problems?

Extension Activity: Disconnect Challenge Alberta Video

As an extension activity, you may choose to have students make their own disconnection challenge video and post it on the #DisconnectChallenge Facebook group.

Distribute the Disconnection Challenge Video handout. Divide students into groups of four to six and have them interview each other about their experiences, then edit the interviews into a video no more than three minutes long. (Recommended video tools are included in the handout sheet.)

Disconnect Challenge Alberta – Week One: Media Use Diary

For this exercise you will be tracking when and how you use media for one week. Use the Media Diary checklist below to help you keep track of your media use and record your thoughts or experiences in the box (fill it out once per day for seven days).

Use the checklist below each day for seven days in a row.

Day _____ : _____ (insert date)

Today, I used a device or app to do the following:

- Entertainment (watching TV or online videos)
- Organizational communication (texting parents/guardians to pick you up; inviting friends to plans)
- Communication with friends or family
- Job, school or activity communication (getting an email from a teacher; scheduling a job interview)
- Keeping in touch with family or friends who live far away
- Seeing what people are doing (checking out friends' or celebrity posts)
- Posting or browsing photos
- Getting news or weather information
- Background music (listening to music while doing homework, reading, etc.)
- Online learning (using screens for school or personal learning)

How connected did you feel today in general? Did the device or app make you feel *more* connected or *less* connected to yourself, to other people or to nature? Record your thoughts/experiences in the comment box below.

Disconnect Challenge Alberta – Week Two: Media Fast Diary

For this exercise you will be tracking when and how you connect with others without technology. Use the Media Diary checklist below to help you keep track of your activities, and record your thoughts or experiences about disconnecting in the box (fill it out once per day for seven days).

Use the checklist below each day for seven days in a row.

Day _____ : _____ (insert date)

Today, I did the following things *without using a device or app*:

- Entertainment (What did you do? e.g. read a book, played a board game _____)
- Organizational communication (arranging for parents/guardians to pick you up; inviting friends to plans)
- Communication with friends or family
- Job, school or activity communication (getting an email from a teacher; scheduling a job interview)
- Keeping in touch with family or friends who live far away
- Seeing what people are doing (What did you do? e.g. asked a friend _____)
- Looked at photos
- Getting news or weather information (What did you do? _____)
- Background music (listening to music with other people)
- Learning (using books for school or personal learning)

How connected did you feel today in general? What did you do *instead* of using a device or app? Did it make you feel *more* connected or *less* connected to yourself, to other people or to nature? Record your thoughts/experiences in the comment box below.

Disconnect Challenge Alberta – Post-Challenge Media Plan

For this assignment you will be making a mindful media plan to help make tech and media part of a balanced life. Take a look at your completed Media Diaries. Do you see any patterns? Which tech or media activities had the biggest impact on your life? Which had the biggest impact on how you felt?

Now create a mindful media plan. This plan should include answers to the following questions, with at least three points for each question:

- What patterns did you observe in how you use media and how it affects you?
- How might you use tech or media differently in the future?
- What are some challenges you think you might face doing that?
- What could you do to deal with them?

Disconnect Challenge Alberta
Task Success Criteria: Post-Challenge Media Plan

| | Learning Expectations | Achievement |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Use</p> <p>Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.</p> | <p><i>Digital health:</i></p> <p>Identify habits and behaviours that can be detrimental to health, and explain how people can be encouraged to adopt healthier alternatives.</p> <p>Develop strategies to assess their technological literacy capability and plan for continuous personal growth.</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |
| <p>Understand</p> <p>Understand includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behavior and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us.</p> <p>Understand also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.</p> | <p><i>Digital health:</i></p> <p>Demonstrate awareness of his/her media habits and the array of media he/she uses on a weekly basis, and the role of digital media in his/her life.</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |
| <p>Create</p> <p>Create is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming and other forms of social media.</p> | <p><i>Digital health:</i></p> <p>Develop personal rules of conduct that ensure healthy and safe practices.</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |

Disconnect Challenge Alberta Video

For this project, you will be creating a video or podcast in which you interview your fellow group members about their experiences doing the Disconnect Challenge Alberta.

Interviewing tips:

Interviews are an excellent way to learn from someone who has knowledge or an opinion about a given topic. Interviews are typically held with both interviewer and interviewee sitting in chairs across from each other in a staged discussion-like setting, though there are any number of other ways to conduct an interview. Get creative! (For example, walking interviews are more challenging to film, but can certainly provide a more interesting product.)

Each interviewer should have at least 3-4 questions prepared to have as a starting point when beginning the interview.

Recommended video editing tools:

- Filmora
Online video editor
<https://filmora.wondershare.com/>
Also available as an app for iOS and Android
- iMovie
iOS video editor
<https://www.apple.com/ca/imovie/>
- WeVideo
Online video editor
<https://www.wevideo.com/>
- Movie Maker
Windows video editor
<http://www.windows-movie-maker.org/>

Disconnect Challenge Alberta
Task Success Criteria: Post-Challenge Video Exercise

| | Learning Expectations | Achievement |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Use Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.</p> | <p><i>Digital health:</i> Identify habits and behaviours that can be detrimental to health, and explain how people can be encouraged to adopt healthier alternatives.</p> <p><i>Making and remixing:</i> Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |
| <p>Understand Understand includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behavior and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us.</p> <p>Understand also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.</p> | <p><i>Digital health:</i> Demonstrate awareness of his/her media habits and the array of media he/she uses on a weekly basis, and the role of digital media in his/her life.</p> <p><i>Making and remixing:</i> Understand how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video) and how culture is produced through the Internet and social media.</p> <p>Show an understanding of the forms and techniques of the medium and genre: - the chosen topic, issue and solution were clear, and, - the product displayed an insight into a topic and opinion</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |
| <p>Create Create is the ability to produce content & effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming and other forms of social media.</p> | <p><i>Making and remixing:</i> Contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems interact, collaborate, co-construct content and publish with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital environments and media.</p> | <p>Insufficient (R); Beginning (1); Developing (2); Competent (3) Confident (4)</p> |