

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

## Creating Healthy News Habits



# GET STARTED

This mini-lesson contains the following activities:

**Activity 1:** Take Stock of Your News Habits

**Activity 2:** Locate Your Sphere of Influence



# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

Read the following excerpt from the *Self* article, [Stressful News Cycle Tips: 13 Ways to Protect Your Mental Health](#):

Being a human with an internet connection in the 21st century means being exposed to one stressful news cycle after the other—we're constantly inundated with headlines, images, and stories about the many newsworthy (often troubling) events unfolding around the globe. It's true that staying informed about and connected to what's happening around us can help us better understand and participate in the world we live in. But it's no secret that being so plugged into the news can also be tough on your [mental health](#)—especially during particularly intense media coverage surrounding things like war and conflict, environmental disasters, political elections, mass violence, public health threats, and social calamities.<sup>1</sup>

1. Carolyn L. Todd, "[Stressful News Cycle Tips: 13 Ways to Protect Your Mental Health](#)," *Self*, accessed August 30, 2023.

# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

## Reflect:

- In the last week, how often did you read or watch the news?
- When you read or watch the news, do you usually feel more positive, for example curious or optimistic? The same as before you read or watched the news? More negative, for example overwhelmed or pessimistic? Does it vary depending on what type of news you read or watch?
- How often do you read just the headline or watch just the beginning of a news clip? How often do you read or watch an entire piece of news?
- Do you think that the news you read is well researched and reliable? Why or why not?

# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

Read the following four tips for healthy news habits:

1. **Know when to unplug:** Reading or watching the news constantly or having notifications always enabled can increase feelings of stress if you are negatively affected by the news. Consider designating times to learn about the news and times when you will avoid it and disable news notifications.

# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

2. **Learn more than the headline:** When you do consume the news, consider reading or watching entire pieces from reliable sources. This can help you stay informed about the issues. Also, news outlets devote more coverage to crises than to upbeat stories. Just scrolling through headlines or watching the beginnings of many news clips can expose you to lots of distressing news without helping you learn deeply about the issues.

# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

3. **Talk it out offline:** People are more likely to express hurtful or simplistic views in online comments than in person, and it is also easier to mistake people's meaning when conversations happen online. Talking through difficult news stories in person with friends and other people you trust can help you sort through your reaction to the story and decide how, if at all, you want to respond.

# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

4. **Find ways to act:** Many news stories cover crises that happen far away from our own communities or that appear complicated and overwhelming. However, our actions do not need to solve an entire problem in order to make a difference. If you choose to act, consider finding small steps you can take, such as helping a friend or neighbor or volunteering for a local organization.



# Activity 1: Take Stock of Your News Habits

Respond to **one** of the following prompts in your journal:

- What is one news habit you have that you want to keep?
- What is one news habit that you would like to adopt going forward?

## Activity 2: Locate Your Sphere of Influence

Choose one broad topic in the news that you care about. You can look through a news source, such as *NPR*, the *AP*, or a regional newspaper for ideas.

Then, determine how this issue impacts your local community by responding to the following prompt:

How does this issue impact you, your family, or your community?

You can change their topic slightly if needed to find a local connection. For example, if you initially chose “natural disasters,” you could shift to “regional heatwaves.”

## Activity 2: Locate Your Sphere of Influence

Now that you have their issue, research the actions that people, organizations, or governments are taking in your local community related to your issue. Create a list of the programs you find.

### Reflect:

What actions from your list do you find most inspiring, and why?

## Activity 2: Locate Your Sphere of Influence

Finally, choose one action that you can take related to your issue. Remember that even seemingly small actions, such as periodically helping a neighbor, can make a difference.

Write your action on a piece of paper or sticky note and create a display of everyone's actions in your classroom.