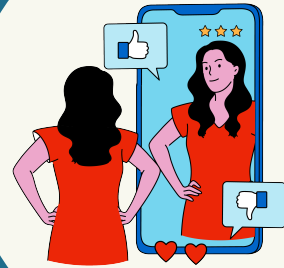


# BEYOND THE PROFILE PIC:

## APPRECIATING EVERYONE'S UNIQUENESS

Why does everyone's life look so perfect on social media, and how do I appreciate each person without thinking my life needs to look like theirs?



In our digital lives, we often face a fundamental tension between celebrating others' successes and protecting our own emotional well-being. This session uses texts, discussions and exercises to explore the core challenge of wanting to genuinely support and appreciate friends' social media content while also maintaining a healthy sense of self-worth that isn't dependent on constant comparison.



### OPENING HOOK: 5 MINUTES

You scroll through your feed during lunch break, your sandwich forgotten beside you. There was Zara at the beach with her family, all matching outfits and perfect smiles. Then came Kevin's basketball tournament victory post, complete with a shiny trophy and teammates lifting him on their shoulders. And of course, there was Luna's art showcase feature, with hundreds of likes and comments praising her talent. Your thumb pauses over each post as a familiar heaviness settles in your chest. A part of you can't help comparing these polished posts to your own regular Wednesday lunch period, with its half-eaten sandwich and nothing particularly post-worthy happening.

- Have you experienced these feelings while looking at social media? If so, did you feel a "heaviness" in your chest or is it a different feeling?

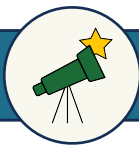


### JEWISH ANCHOR: 5 MINUTES

A Mishnah in Sanhedrin teaches: "A single person was created to teach you that whoever destroys a single life, it is as if they destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a single life, it is as if they saved an entire world" (Sanhedrin 4:5). This powerful teaching emphasizes the value of every human life, but it also highlights the uniqueness of each individual. The Mishnah goes on to describe this uniqueness with a metaphor: even though coins are stamped with the same seal, each one comes out slightly different.

Social media has the potential to celebrate the way we are all unique and special, but sometimes, we scroll to think about how we can be like everyone else instead of how we can be ourselves. Celebrating uniqueness can also be hard when social media can make us uncomfortable with our lives not looking like a social media page.

- When we are not ourselves and do not let others be themselves, how can it be like "destroying a world"?
- Can we use social media more as a means of celebrating uniqueness and individuality? What would you change about your use of social media to accomplish this?



## ACTIVITY: 10 MINUTES

Have each student take a minute to fill in the blanks of this sentence independently: One trait that I appreciate about myself that does not come across in social media is that I am \_\_\_\_\_. Something that I appreciate in others, which is hard to see in people's posts, is when they are \_\_\_\_\_.

\*You can use the list of traits below if that is helpful.

- When completed, have each person trade their answers with the person next to them and discuss what they wrote.

**Traits:** Active • Adventurous • Artistic • Athletic • Caring • Creative • Curious • Determined • Energetic • Friendly • Funny • Good listener • Hard-working • Helpful • Honest • Independent • Kind • Leader • Loyal • Organized • Patient • Positive • Problem solver • Reliable • Smart • Supportive • Team player • Thoughtful • Understanding

**Group Discussion:** What important individual traits about people are often overlooked by social media or society? What do real-life intimate interactions with peers remind us to value? If you feel comfortable, can you share the trait you love about yourself that does not appear on social media?



## VALUES IN ACTION: 5 MINUTES

Choose one of these support challenges for the week:

- **Talk Instead:** Take three different moments when you are about to go on social media and use them instead to call a friend or make plans with an individual.
- **Profile Collage:** Take a blank piece of paper and design a collaged profile by cutting out words and pictures that express your uniqueness. Hang it in your room to remind you that you are a unique "entire world."
- **Real Life Compliment:** Instead of "liking" a post on social media, approach a friend and tell them about a trait they possess that you admire.
- **Social Media Values:** Think about being more conscious of your social media interactions and try to disconnect from at least two people you feel are posting content that does not reflect your values. Then, find two new people to follow who post content that does reflect your values.

### Closing Thought:

How did this exercise help you think more consciously about what traits and values matter most to you, even when social media often centers different traits and values? What unique traits do you now notice about your friends or yourself that you did not notice before?

### NOTE FOR TEACHERS:

- If there are students in the room who are not allowed to use social media, point out that these lessons still apply when engaging in large social situations.
- Make sure not to have any technology around during this discussion, even though social media is being discussed, because it will likely distract from the content.