

CASE SCENARIO FOR PROVIDERS

SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Medical Appointment with Kayla (16)

Pediatric and adolescent providers can integrate conversations about social media use into health consultations with increased confidence knowing that their acknowledgement and guidance can have a positive influence on youth and families. A healthy relationship with a trusted adult is a protective factor for youth mental health and many youth trust health care providers' expertise.¹ Talk about social media in the spirit of health and wellness, not judgment and control. Engage with youth and their caregivers by demonstrating curiosity and offering your partnership.²



TIP: Submit any questions you have to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [Center for Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health Q&A Portal](#) for a personalized and evidence-based response. Patients can also look to the portal for additional support outside of the office. The [AAP's policy statement](#) on media use offers some key recommendations for pediatricians.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a method for talking with people about change and growth to strengthen their own motivation and commitment. This process is grounded in research about what makes conversations more or less helpful, allowing others to explore change more comfortably. Relational skills include demonstrating compassion, acceptance, partnership and empowerment. Technical skills include asking open-ended questions and using reflective listening statements. Because change is a process and rarely a straight line, the discussion moves like a dance and takes into consideration the person's values, identities, beliefs, age, culture and social structures.

Kayla is 16 years old and identifies as Black/African American and female. She uses social media mostly to watch makeup tutorials. She recently started recording and posting her own videos so she can help younger girls with similar skin tones feel more confident.



Provider: It sounds like you are eager to share your experience and support others. (reflection, empowerment)

Kayla: Yeah, I didn't feel good about myself when I was younger, and I want to show girls how to find the right products for their skin and spread positive messages along the way.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Social Media and
Youth Mental Health

FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE

WHAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR RADAR:

- An adolescent's drive for independence becomes stronger and there may be increases in parent-teen conflict. Teens have more choices and independence around the media content they choose, which may be quite different than what they had seen as a child.
- Social media use can be a part of healthy and normal adolescent development, communication and peer relationship building. Adolescence can also be a time in which peer relationships undergo rocky times and challenging situations, some of which can be exacerbated by digital communications.
- Middle adolescence (ages 14-17) can be a time of intense pressure for conformity across some teens. This pressure, combined with the tendency of middle adolescent age youth to see themselves as unbreakable, can lead to risky behavior.



Provider: What would you say are the best parts about social media? (open-ended question, acceptance)

Kayla: I like that I can learn a lot about beauty and skin care and that I can find other creators who look like me.



Provider: You are learning about things you care about and connecting with others – that’s great. What do you dislike about social media? (open-ended question, curiosity)

Kayla: Well, I’ve seen enough hurtful posts to know that we have to speak up for ourselves and be the representation and positive voice we want to see.



Provider: You’re trying to change the negativity and bias that causes harm and shine a spotlight for a population of girls who are often ignored on social media. (reflection, compassion)

Kayla: Right. The trolls try to bring me down, and some days they do. But I’m starting to get my own followers. Some are really going through bad stuff, and they open up to me, so I want to be an inspiration the way other Black women have been for me.



Provider: Hearing from other young women holds meaning for you. And you feel a sense of responsibility when hearing their stories. (reflection, compassion)

Kayla: Yeah, it can be a lot. I mean, it’s the internet, so who knows what’s real and what isn’t.



Provider: You’re right, it can be a lot – some creators say they feel pressure to keep posting or responding to followers. I’m curious, what are the signals that let you know you’re in need of a break or some offline support? And what does that support look like? (open-ended question, empowerment)

Kayla: Sometimes racist comments make me really anxious, and I get knots in my stomach. When it starts to wear me down, I usually vent to my cousin or my mom.



Provider: I’m sorry you are experiencing racist comments; that sounds really hurtful. I’m glad to hear you have your mom and your cousin for support. And you’ve identified your own signals – knots in your stomach and feeling anxious – that tell you it’s time to pause and connect with people you trust. (empathy, reflection, empowerment)

Kayla: Yeah ... I guess so!



Provider: If you’re open to it, I have some additional resources that might interest you. Things like how to control your settings to block racist commenters and negative accounts. I can give you some information on organizations focusing on mental health for Black girls that might be helpful. I also have some information on what to do if someone you know is feeling sad and tips on social media for teens. And maybe we can talk a little more about how you’re feeling and explore these tools together next time we meet. (acceptance, partnership)



Self-reflection questions:

1. How did the provider build partnership?
2. What can empowerment look like between a provider and a youth client?
3. Where is there room for acceptance and choice in conversations like these?
4. What cues from this client gave you the sense she was engaged?
5. What would you do differently in this interaction to support growth and change?



RESOURCES FOR PROVIDERS

Visit the [AAP Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#) and check out the following resources for more information and tools:

- [Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers \(MINT\)](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org: Family Media Plan](#)





- **National Council for Mental Wellbeing:** [Addressing Health Equity and Racial Justice Within Integrated Care Settings toolkit](#)
- **National Council for Mental Wellbeing:** [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#)
- **National Council for Mental Wellbeing:** [Pediatric Integration \(webinar series\)](#)
- **The Jed Foundation:** [Getting Mental Health Support in Black Families](#)

The following resources are information you can share directly with parents and youth:

- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [Social Media: Enjoy the Upsides and Avoid the Downsides](#)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [Social Media Tips for Teens](#)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [Family Social Media Tip Sheet](#)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** [5Cs of Media Use](#)
- [Black Girls Smile](#)
- [Melanin and Mental Health](#)
- **Common Sense Media:** [Parents' Ultimate Guide to TikTok](#)
- **National Council for Mental Wellbeing:** [What Can Young Change Makers Do?](#)
- **The Loveland Foundation:** Mental health organization on [Instagram](#) focused on Black women and girls
- **Therapy for Black Girls:** Mental health resources on [Instagram](#)
- **Crisis Lines:**
 - [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) is a 24/7 treatment referral and information service.
 - [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) offers 24/7, confidential support for people in distress.
 - [The Trevor Project](#) provides 24/7 crisis support services to LGBTQ+ young people.
 - [FindTreatment.gov](#) helps people seek treatment for mental and substance use disorders.
 - [National Institute of Mental Health](#) outlines additional mental health services.

REFERENCES

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2. Moreno, M.A., Klein, J.D, Kaseeska, K., Gorzkowski, J., Harris, D., Davis, J., Gotlieb, E., & Wasserman, R. (2023, August 12). A cluster randomized controlled trial of a primary care provider-delivered social media counseling intervention. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.06.007>.

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