



## Lesson 3: Can you trust everyone who contacts you online?

**Target audience:** KS3 (11-14 year olds)

**Lesson aim:** To highlight to young people that not everyone who contacts them online is trustworthy and they may have a hidden agenda

**Learning objectives:**

- Students can understand why people may contact them online
- Students can identify the hidden agendas and motives of why people contact them online
- Students know how to report if they have any concerns about someone online

<b>Timing:</b>	40-45 minute lesson	<b>Key words:</b>	critical thinking, hidden agendas, motive, trust
<b>Resources:</b>	PowerPoint, worksheets	<b>Preparation:</b>	Photocopy worksheets, familiarise yourself with the recommended reading

### Lesson outline

Lesson outline	Description	Resources	Class set up	Timing
<b>Starter</b>	Being a critical thinker online	Slides 3-6	Whole class	8 mins
<b>Activity 1</b>	Friend or stranger?	Slides 7-9	Pair work	5 mins
<b>Activity 2</b>	Risky messages: risk Vs. harm	Slides 10-17 <b>Appendix 1</b>	Group work	20 mins
<b>Activity 3</b>	Devise checklist	Slide 18	Pair work	7 mins
<b>Plenary</b>	Time to reflect and take-away recap	Slides 19-21	Whole class	5 mins



Thinking critically about what you see online

### Before you begin

It is important to establish a safe learning environment that students feel comfortable and able to participate in. You may wish to review your seating plan and set clear ground rules for the sessions. More information and guidance on this can be found in the Teachers Guidance document on page 3.

### **Starter: Being a critical thinker online**

7 minutes

Revise the terminology from Lesson 1. Ask the class again to explain what they understand by the words **'trust'**, **'hidden agenda'** and **'critical thinking'**. Use the word cloud to support discussions around these words. (Slide 3)

Begin by discussing how the students use social media, apps and the internet to contact others. Which are their favourite apps/games/websites to communicate on and why? (Slide 4).

Why is it important to think critically about the contact we receive online? What do we need to think critically about? (Slide 5).

Allow your students to come up with examples but there are suggestions you can click through to stimulate conversation or reveal as answers.

- **Who is it?** Do they say who they are or is it clear from the message/ comment?
- **How do I know them?** Is this someone I know in the offline world or just online? How long have I known this person? What is my relationship to them? (Family, friend, peer, stranger etc).
- **What do they want?** Have they been clear about why they are messaging/ comment or is there something you suspect?
- **Was I expecting the message?** Is this message/ comment a reply or in context for the situation? Or is this an unexpected contact?
- **Are they asking me to do anything?** Have they made any suggestions for me to send something? Go somewhere? Click something? etc.
- **What is their tone like?** How are they speaking to me? Are they being unusually kind or pushy?
- **Do they make any claims?** Have they claimed something is true which you are unsure about? Have they used a statistic or 'fact'? Do they promise something will happen or not happen if you do something they have asked for?

Now ask students to reflect on whether online contact is always trustworthy based on everything they have just shared (slide 6). Allow students to give answers before clicking through and asking 'how do you know?' This is where students can share their existing strategies for deciphering whether or not online contact is trustworthy.

### **Activity 1: Friend or stranger?**

5 minutes

Divide the class into pairs and ask them to come up with a list as to **why** someone might contact you online. (Slide 7) It is important for students to be aware that we are talking about online contacts here – people that they may not know in real life. Allow students to give answers and include the following possible reasons in your discussion:

- **To sell you something:** eg. the benefits of a product may be exaggerated in an advert or advertorial
- **To make you do something:** eg. an article might have an exaggerated headline to make you click on it



Thinking critically about what you see online

- **To persuade you:** eg. someone might share an inaccurate story about someone to persuade you to vote for that person in an election
- **To change your views or beliefs** – eg. someone might post a video that was edited to get across a certain message about religious beliefs or views

Immediately follow this with **how** someone might gain their trust online. (Slide 8)

**Suggested answers:** *by being nice, by asking you questions, by suggesting you try new things*

Feedback to the group. Some answers from the second question may sound like how a good friend might behave online (slide 9). Ask the learners how do they know the difference between a friend online who they can trust, and someone they don't know, ie. A stranger who may want to gain their trust for negative reasons?

Explain to the group that a friend usually doesn't have a **hidden agenda** for wanting to gain your trust, whereas a stranger might. It is important to always be critical of who you might be speaking to and not to allow them to influence you in any undue way.

### Activity 2: Risky messages

20 minutes

This activity challenges young people to put their critical thinking skills to the test. They will need to look at these messages sent by online contacts and assess if they think the messages are risky or not (Slide 10).

#### Before you start

Explain to the class that they will see a range of 5 messages sent by people online who they don't necessarily know in real life.

Divide the class into groups of 5 and explain that each group will follow a different numbered conversation (1-5) as you show them the progression of messages (slides 11-14). As each group reads their assigned numbered conversation, encourage them to be thinking the following:

- Would you trust this person?
- What are they asking for?
- Could the messages be read in a different way?
- Is there a potential risk?

Explain there will be a handout of all the messages related to their number at the end, so they don't need to be too worried about reading each message clearly. Allow 3-5 minutes to read through the messages on the board together.

#### Risk vs Harm

Hand out the sheets in Appendix 1 for each group so they can read their assigned messages all together. Ask them to circle when or if the messages begin to seem risky and to discuss the four question on the bottom right of the page. What is the possible motive or agenda of the person making contact? Allow 5 minutes.

Once most groups are finished, ask the class to look at slide 15 and explain the difference between risk and harm. Some messages we receive online could have a high risk factor as we are often exposed to them and they could become dangerous if you engage. However, certain risks may not result in serious harm for the individual, depending on that person.

*For example, if we take Cyberbullying in the form of messages the harm might be medium to high, depending on the person. This is due to the fact that the messages could have a long lasting effect on an individual, and depending on what is being said, cyberbullying could become dangerous if threats were involved, and therefore, the risk is high.*



#### Thinking critically about what you see online

As a class, model the example on [slide 15](#) which could be read in a few different ways. Depending on the students' experience, the risk or the 'dangerous outcomes' of receiving such a direct message like this could be relatively low, and if students think that person merely wants to talk to you, the perceived level of potential harm could be low. However, if students receive messages like this quite often and if they were aware that the conversation could turn risky, the risk could be higher. If they were worried that a person is contacting them for negative reasons such as to exploit or harm, they could say the harm is high.

Explain that later in their respective groups, they will need to do the same for their own final message.

**Informal assessment opportunity:** This activity provides an excellent opportunity to gain insight into your students' perception of risks online: whether they can identify potential risks in the first instance, how they would manage/engage with that risk, and how they correlate that perception of risk against a perception of possible harm. If learners are unable to identify some risks then they could benefit from future PSHE/form sessions where they could complete follow up work and discussions on those risks.

#### Next step

Then, ask each group to turn their worksheet page over and plot their final message on their risk Vs. harm graph. Allow 5 minutes. To help learners, ask them to consider the following:

- How risky is this situation?
- What do you think could happen?
- How might someone feel if they experienced harm as a result of this situation?
- What is the harm done? - It could be psychological, reputational, emotional or even physical

NB: For this activity it is important to remember that adults and young people may perceive risks differently. Adults may apply life experience and other knowledge when evaluating a risk, and may consider the potential harm further down the line of the scenario than actually exists at the current point (e.g. thinking about the worst possible outcome/end point).

For young people, this forward thinking of potential harm may not be present. They may also downplay the level of risk and harm for some scenarios if they feel confident in managing that risk (eg. *'I'll accept this stranger's invitation to join their WhatsApp group as I'm interested, but if I don't like it/feel uncomfortable, then I know I can leave the group and block them.'*)

Feedback as a group and ask each group to summarise their message and where they plotted it on the risk vs harm graph. Discuss with the class;

- What someone should do if they received these messages.
- How someone could manage the situation if it changed/ escalated.
- How someone could exit the situation if it became uncomfortable.
- How could someone respond to the message?

Should students receive unwanted contact online, they can report such messages and it is important for them to know where to go ([Slide 17](#)):

- **CEOP:** Formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, CEOP is a command of the National Crime Agency (NCA). Their mandate is grooming. If a student is worried about someone contacting them online, asking lots of personal questions, asking for a photo or to go on webcam, or even to meet up in real life, they should report to CEOP. [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/)
- **Social media and gaming reporting routes:** Many social networks and gaming networks allow you to block and report the profile of the person contacting you, or the posts that they share. Although the content in the messages you receive from a person may not always be



### Thinking critically about what you see online

abusive, you can report by saying 'this person is annoying me'. Look at our safety checklists and social media guides to see how to report people or content online -

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/checklists](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/checklists) or [www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/social-media-guides](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/social-media-guides)

- **Counter terrorism reporting:** Should you see content online encouraging people to commit acts of terrorism or anything that might condone or encourage acts of violence, you can report anonymously to the government. [www.gov.uk/report-terrorism](http://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism). Should you receive messages from people promoting this type of illegal behaviour, you should also report it here.

Remind the class that although they may think the risk and harm is low for certain online messages, it is always important to tell an adult if anything worries or upsets them online.

**NB: If a student makes a disclosure about coercion online, or you have any concerns or suspicions that a student has been approached by an adult online in this way, then this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in your school and your school's safeguarding procedures should be followed.**

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to run this entire activity as a small group following just one conversation. This provides you with the opportunity to select the example which poses the most relevant risk to your students. The other examples could be used in subsequent lessons or for an independent task.

### Activity 3: 'What to look out for?' checklist

7 minutes

In pairs, ask the class to devise a checklist of things or a list of questions everyone should consider when speaking to people online (Slide 18). This checklist will hopefully help others understand if an online friend is to be trusted or not. Ask each pair to come up with at least 4 things to consider while speaking to an online contact.

Some points to include may be:

- Why did the person contact you?
- Do you reveal a lot about yourself?
- What are they asking you to do?
- Do they have an agenda?

Feedback as a group and record common points on a central class checklist. This could be displayed in class or even throughout the school.

### Plenary: Time to reflect and take away recap

5 minutes

#### Time to reflect

Critical thinking isn't about rejecting any online messages or comments but instead about taking the time to question what you have received. After everything they have discussed in this lesson, ask the students to reflect on the question 'does this mean we can't trust anyone now?' and offer advice to someone who may be feeling this way (Slide 19).

Remind your class that not everyone online has an ulterior motive or a hidden agenda, but it is always important to be critical about who we speak to online, and if anyone worries or upsets them online, they should talk to someone as soon as possible.

#### Take Aways

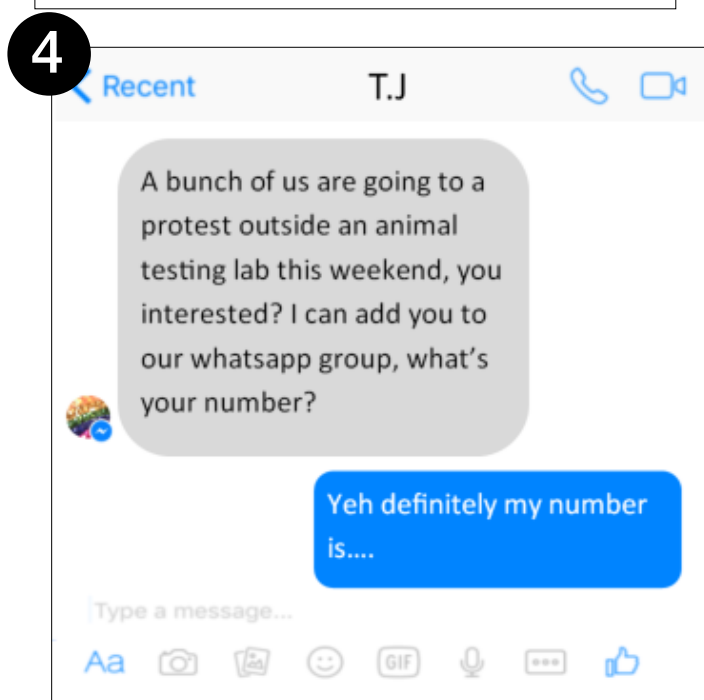
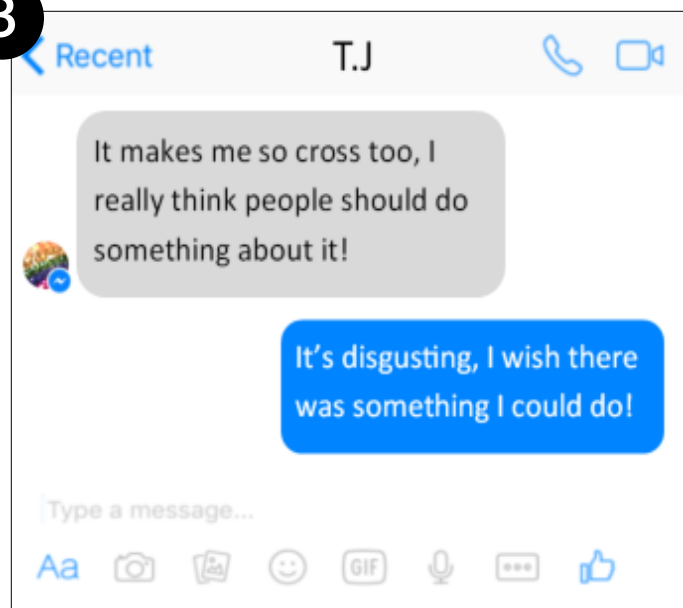
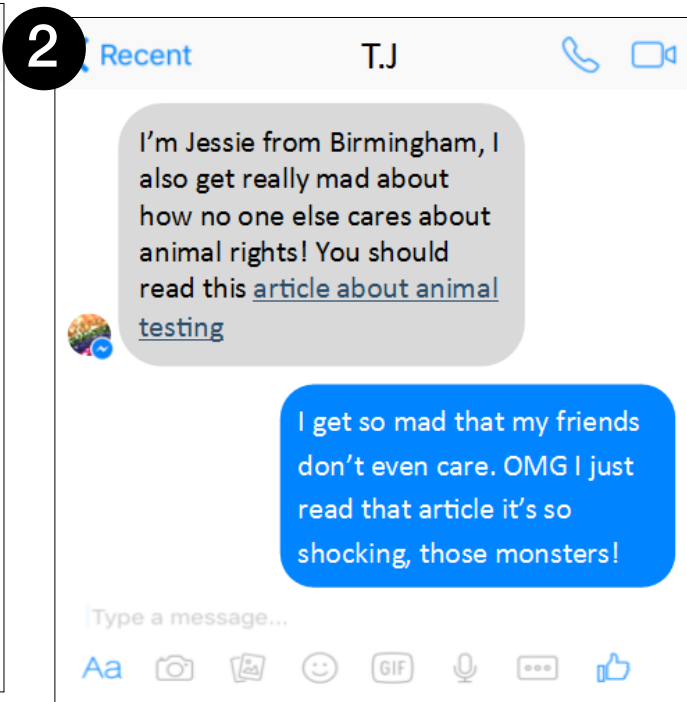
As a recap of the lesson, go through slide 20 with the main take-away points from the session.

(Please note slide 20 is animated so all messages do not appear at once when in presentation mode.)

Finally run through slide 21 with the students, reminding them that it is not their fault if something goes wrong online and emphasising the importance of talking to an adult if anything worries or upsets them online.

# ? Trust me

## Thinking critically about what you see online



**What could be the possible motive behind each message?**

1. Would you trust this person?
2. What are they asking for?
3. Could the messages be read in a different way?
4. Is there any potential risk?



# ? Trust me

## Thinking critically about what you see online

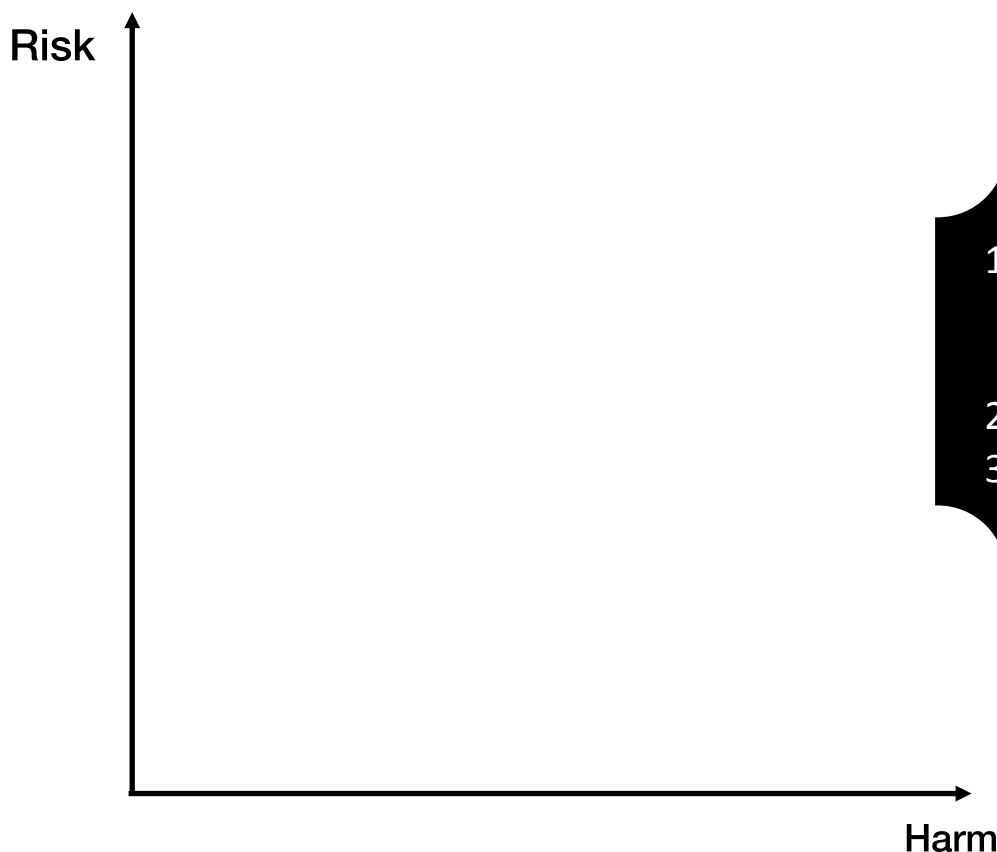
Use the graph to plot the level of risk (how risky you think the situation is) against the level of harm that it could cause. This harm could be physical, emotional, psychological or reputational.

Are all risky situations going to result in harm?

4



## Risk vs. Harm



1. Why did the person start the conversation in first place?
2. Is there a clear motive?
3. Is there a potential risk?

# ? Trust me

## Thinking critically about what you see online

1

CoDKing2712



Rep Gamerscore 23150 G  
Zone Pro

### Message Text

Great game, you are definitely the best player in this team. I don't do this for everyone but do you want to join my elite clan?

Reply

Ahh thanks mate, you serious? tell me more!

2

CoDKing2712



Rep Gamerscore 23150 G  
Zone Pro

### Message Text

I get bored playing these noobs, i'm sure you're the same! i've only invited players as good or better than you, do you want in?

Reply

Sounds good what do i need to?

3

CoDKing2712



Rep Gamerscore 23150 G  
Zone Pro

### Message Text

Just follow this [link](#), all you have to do is enter your email address!

Reply

Sounds good, i'll join tomorrow, getting so bored of rage quitters want to play with people who are serious about the game!

4

CoDKing2712



Rep Gamerscore 23150 G  
Zone Pro

### Message Text

Yeh me too but lets see how you fare with the pros! Keep your gamertag so I know it's you! We webchat afterwards to talk about the game, they are a great bunch!

Reply

Cool sounds good, do you need my skype username for that?

**What could be the possible motive behind**

1. Would you trust this person?
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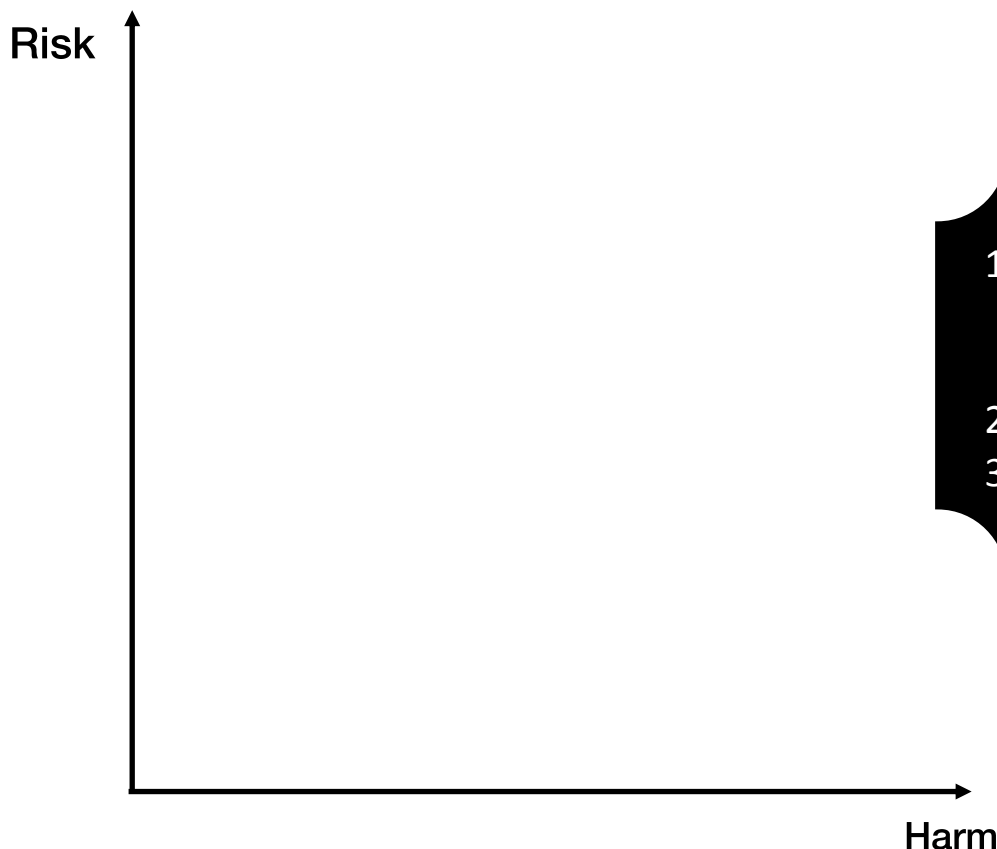


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Rep  
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★★★★★  
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## Thinking critically about what you see online

1

< S.D

S.D  
Hey I met you outside the cinema last week with your mates. I hope you don't mind me contacting you. Hope you don't think I'm a weirdo 🤪

Me  
Yeh I think I remember you. How did you find me?

Send a chat

2

< S.D

S.D  
Yeh I'm not a stalker or anything 😊  
Your friend told me your name and I guessed you went to mount high too. What year are you in?

Me  
Hmm, that is slightly creepy 😬  
I'm in year 8

Send a chat

3

< S.D

S.D  
Me too!! Are you going to the cinema again this week, be cool to see you there 😊

Me  
Yeh I might be going with my mates ... would be weird to see you there when I don't even know your name 😊

Send a chat

4

< S.D

S.D  
Haha yeh true my name is Sam Davies, you can ask around I'm not weird I promise! Guna pick a film around 7 on sat, see you there?

Me  
Cool I'll see what's on, maybe see you there

Send a chat

**What could be the possible motive behind**

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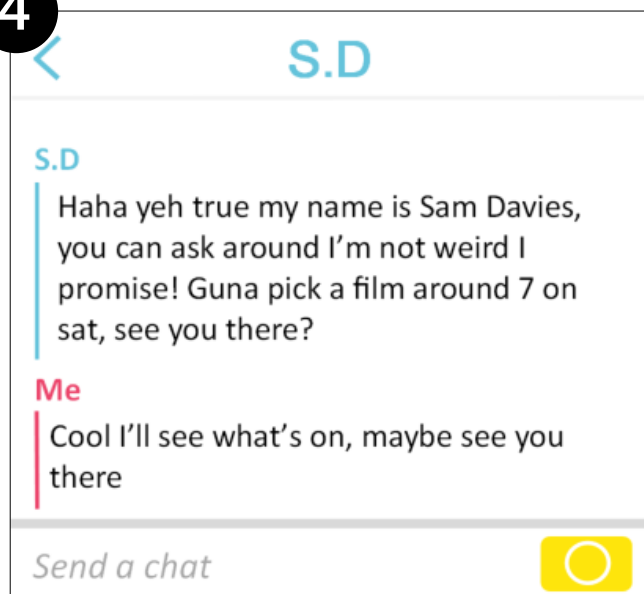
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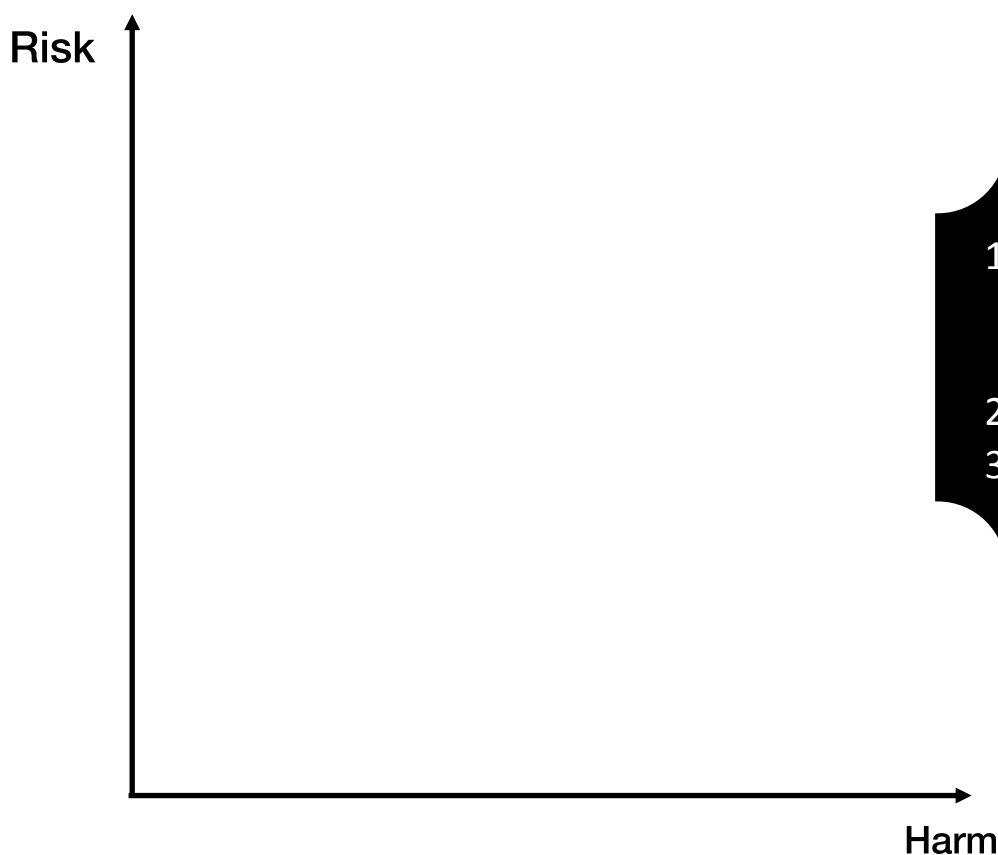
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## Thinking critically about what you see online

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

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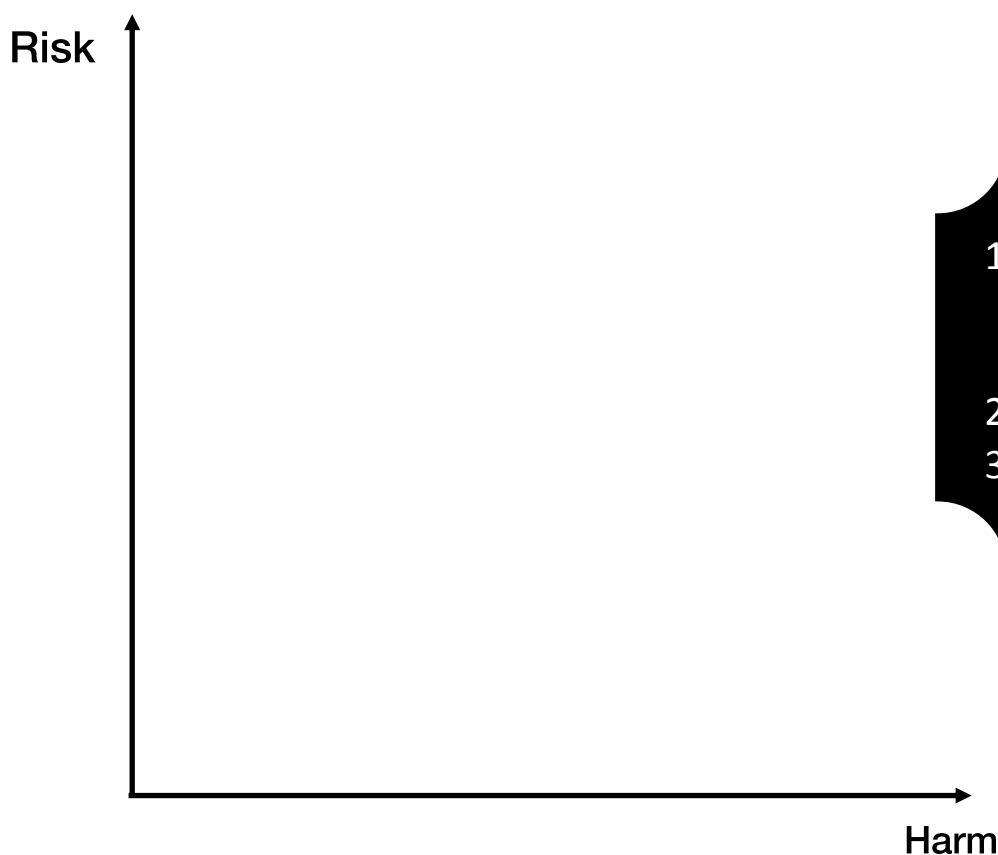
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## Risk vs. Harm



4

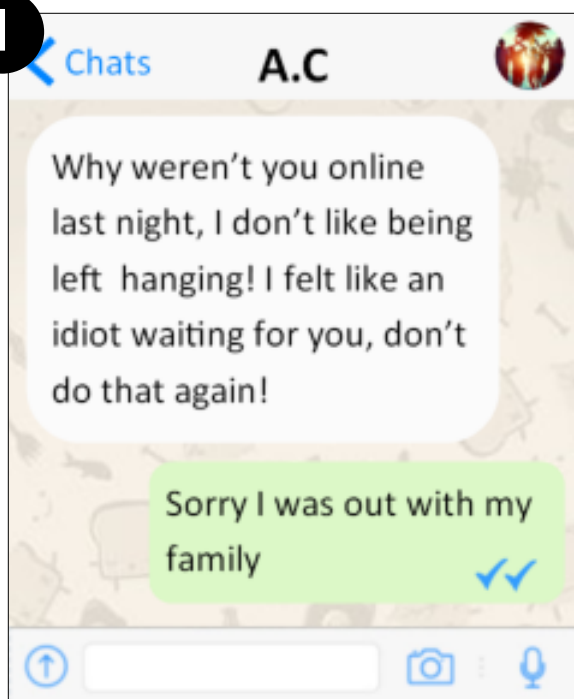


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# ? Trust me

Thinking critically about what you see online

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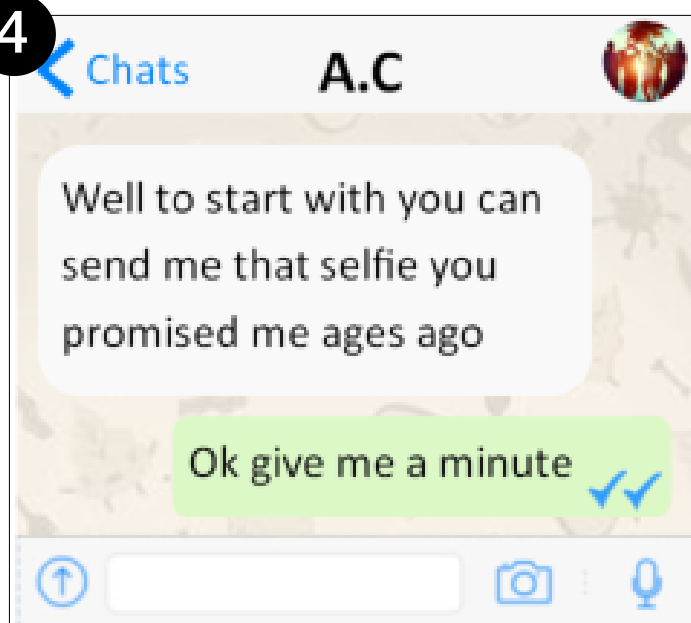
2



3



4



**What could be the possible motive behind**

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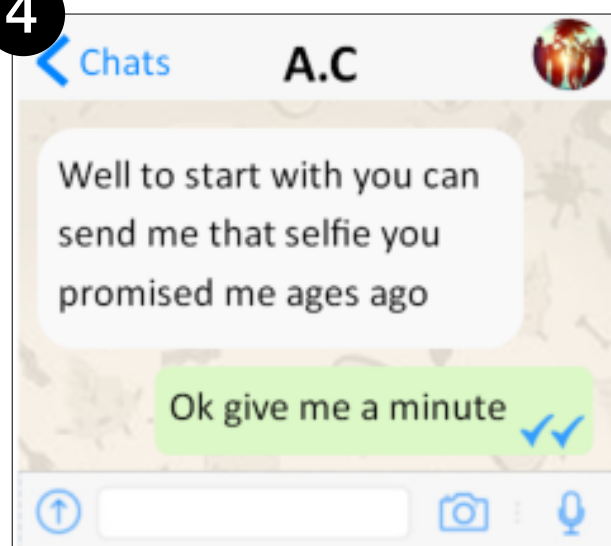
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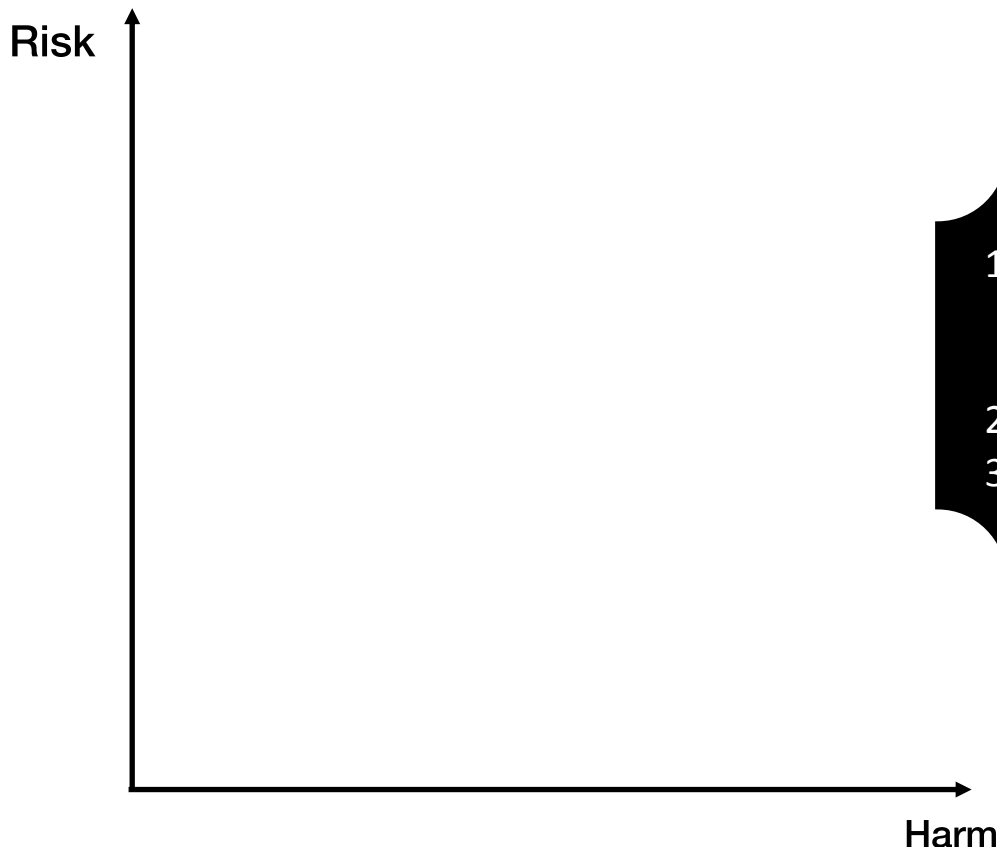
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