PROMOTING WELLBEING IN USING TECHNOLOGY

SCENARIO 10

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Refers to Modules:

Digital wellbeing

Relates to Standards:

Digital wellbeing
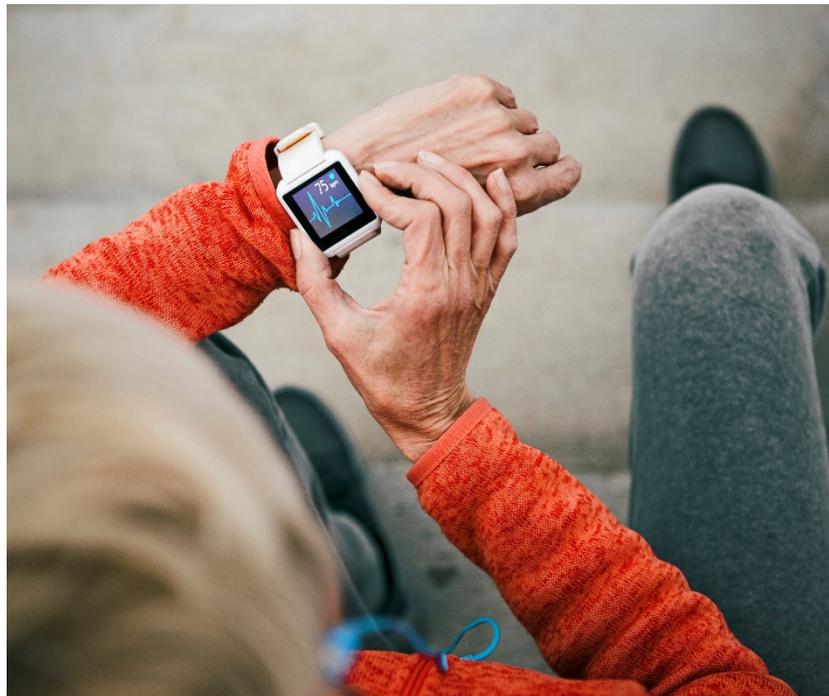
PROMOTING WELLBEING IN USING TECHNOLOGY

Scenario 10

There are two aspects to promoting the wellbeing of users using technology. They relate to:

1. Understanding and managing the physical and psychological problems that can occur through prolonged open, unguarded spells of using devices and interacting with others.

2. Utilising in a mindful way the huge range of benefits that promotes wellbeing to be found in the support of technology to inform, guide, improve efficiency and productivity, and measure, report on fitness that adds to general wellbeing.

The risks

Using technology is not inherently dangerous or damaging, but physical problems can occur from absorption into long periods of interaction that leads to loss of awareness relating to posture, lack of movement generally and strains and stresses from holding uncomfortable positions in using devices.

The problems are worse when the devices are fixed and offer only one way to use them. At least with a laptop, users can mover or change location.

Secondly, psychological problems can occur from the nature of interactions and conversations had online. This can involve being a bully, being hateful, vindictive or controlling.

Being aware of potential problems helps users be alert to the dangers as they arise and have strategies in place to deal with them.

Promoting wellbeing

Wellbeing is more than just avoiding harm. That would be a nil-sum situation. Doing no harm is not wellness. It requires a more thoughtful level of activity to positively promote health and find ways of using technology to help manage health.

Improving Lifestyle

Sometimes, it includes finding ways of working with technology that isn't sedentary or involving periods of prolonged physical inactivity. Listening to a podcast whilst traveling on the bus or walking to work or attending a virtual meeting whilst working your dog. Plan to check and respond to email over coffee then closing the lid.

Not least is using technology in a manner that improves productive efficiency in completing the administrative tasks of living, making more time available, away from the administrative chores of life and in the working life to enjoy other more important things.

Physical problems

Physical problems occur because of prolonged inactivity and holding bad posture or undertaking repetitive activity using a fixed device and components.

Inactivity and inattention to posture occurs because of over absorption in working.

TEACHING TIP

It follows that problems are less acute when using technology that is mobile, or portable, and taking place in different places rather than all at one desk. As users move to portability, so the risks should diminish.

The problem of accommodating the technology

Bad posture becomes a problem if the workstation is badly set up. Users fit the set up rather than change the layout to fit them.

A good idea is to think about the desk, chair and posture as part of the overall package of technology and our connection with it, rather than thinking of the keyboard and screen as something users go to.

It is a historic problem of technology being designed out of the file paper-based office layout and is caused by users seeing technology as an extension of working at a desk as happens with using paper.

Technology is an extension of the office concept but not the office furniture. It is a new way of working requiring a different approach.

✎ TEACHING TIP

Explain using diagrams how:

1. The user should never be asked to 'fit' the technology unless for short bursts of use.
2. The technology should always fit around and accommodate the needs, shape, impairments and health issues of the user.
3. The surfaces, chairs, noise, light and space are part of the technology.

Teach good posture, starting with what is comfortable, and fitting the technology to the person.

Time

Having resolved posture, the second aspect is to break up time spent in one position into periods that don't exceed 30 minutes. Standing up, stretching, moving around all help prevent problems caused by time spent in one fixed position.

Working from home can sometimes be worse because there are less opportunities for others to break up activity, to deal with interruption, or provide social interaction. In these cases, users should set time alarms or have a clock nearby.

Psychological pressures

A second way in which wellbeing can be compromised comes from being dissatisfied with the results of time spent using technology. It's not from poor posture but prolonged time spent interacting with one of two things:

1. Dissatisfaction with what is being achieved for the time spent.

2. Interactions with others is painful, hurtful, disrespectful or worse.

To get a sense of 'time well spent', it is always good to start using technology with a purpose in mind or a time limit set, or at least planning breaks during a longer session.

Importantly, it is better to achieve a plan rather than fill time.

TEACHING TIP

Use resources from The Crown Prosecution Service (https://www.cps.gov.uk/cyber-online-crime) for resources on dealing with bullying.

Range of communications

The range of conversations held through technology are as diverse as there are groups and people to talk to.

In most cases, where video calling is not used and to a lesser extent where audio is used, both sides are unable to use body language.

The loss of facial expression and body language removes the context for what is being said. Whilst it is helpful to see people through video contact, that is not always wise, wanted, convenient or appropriate.

Netiquette

Much has been said about the need for good etiquette in talking to others because the loss of these signals can have a liberating effect on some who use words carelessly or in a way where the normal aids to understanding are removed, making the opportunity for misunderstanding very common.

Sadly, some who have no regard nor understanding to these things find satisfaction in being specifically hurtful. The sense of distance and weakened identity, liberates many to be hateful, controlling or manipulative. Recognising these traits in others and learning to block them speedily is an important tool in maintaining wellbeing.

TEACHING TIP

Guidance is available in the scenarios **Communicating and Sharing online** on good communications and **The Digital footprint and digital identity** in relation to having a good digital reputation.

Scenario 5: Six positive ways of responding to a group posting

Scenario 6: A netiquette strategy

The problem of bullying

The ability of the internet to connect just about anyone with anyone else is extraordinary and has led to new ways to provide running commentaries, not only on the big events of the day but almost every publicised action now has a thread of conversation flowing from it.

Experts can be asked questions; interest groups can be joined. Heroes and wise people can be consulted. The speed at which this has happened has left any notion of skill in how to do this well trailing, and for some, the temptation to write directly to anyone on their radar and comment in a manner of their choosing is too much.

The web is peppered with poor, ignorant, rude and insulting commentaries. When it is aimed at an individual and is calculated to coerce or hurt, it is a form of bullying. For some it is intentional, but for others, particularly the young, it can be a failure to understand how to suitably deal with communications across the web. The solution to cyberbullying is education.

Bias confirmation

Bias confirmation is characterised by the human desire to read, explore and join groups who confirm their views of the world. In a sense this is not problematic, but it also describes a desire to discount dissenting information and to avoid anything that challenges our way of seeing the world.

From the connectivity aspect of the web, it means that here is a tendency of groups to cheer together in a place of mutually supporting and affirming sites. Again, this may be perfectly OK and, where learners are aware of this problem, quite safe. The difficulty comes when people seek out and affirm hateful or damaging views or come under the influence of more radical manifestations of views.

The web can render the unwary open to any number of influences, views, opinions, where reliability and validity are not considered. The problem is more acute amongst the young. Adults may be no less aware but have better methods of withstanding unwanted approaches.

✎ TEACHING TIP

In all cases, dealing with risks is in part being aware of them and identifying them as they arise.

Knowing when to withdraw, block, talk to trusted others or report inappropriate contact.

Using technology to promote positive wellbeing

One of the emerging advantages of using technology is its increasing ability to connect to, measure and track bio-medical readings.

Fit-bits, watches and other 'worn' tracking software can provide 'reminders to move' and results on that activity. It seems that manufactures understand that there is a market for not just mitigating the effect of poor designed or 'set-up' of technology but using it to help mitigate the problems caused by technology (amongst other things).

Apart from devices that motor health, technology will accommodate target setting options that measure inactivity and tell the user to 'move' as well as target setting activities.

Target setting raises the value of technology to a means of managing fitness and improving it in a measured way. Worn devices help pace activity, give percentage improvement, track actual activity and the physical results of it in action.

There are emerging applications that allows 'worn' technology to notify of acute health problems and provide emergency contacts in the event of a problem.

One way to look at the issue of wellbeing and technology is to decide whether the technology is managing the user or the user manages it. Battling with technology is not how it should be, although the pace of change of what is possible and what is available seems to be both exciting and challenging in equal amounts.

Getting things the right way around

Users of technology are drawn to its ability to help engagement in interesting activities and exciting ideas, as well as improve daily lives.

However, there is a chance that in all the excitement to get caught up in the technology itself, the risk is in pursuing these advantages means the users become consumed in the processes.

It is possible that prolonged engagement and frequent returning to technology can lead to tiredness that creates a vicious circle of poor concentration leading to non-productivity, leading to more hours spent engaged in trying to achieve something. It is a second instance of not mastering time, task and technique, and comes about through poor practice and habits.

Another example of the need to getting things the right way around was discussed in the opening part of this scenario to look carefully at where and how engagement with technology takes place. Fortunately, as technology becomes smaller and more portable, users spend less time working in fixed positions and places. It helps prevent harm caused by excessive periods of computer time spent in one position. The 'office' can be a coffee shop or a bus seat, or sofa.

The size, portability and connectivity of modern devices means that we are moving away from this fixed model of working.

Learning activity:

Ask learners to consider the following actions that we notice all the time, and many of us are guilty of, in the way technology controls our actions.

Use the **Managed by technology checklist**.

Ask learners to look at the list of actions and see whether any of them describe their own activity.

Ideally, they should be ticking the 'I don't do this' list. If this isn't the case, how can they improve their computer time?

Summary

This module related to ways technology can become problematic.

It explores underlying reasons why technology, when used thoughtfully can offer huge advantages to health and wellbeing by avoiding some of the pitfalls in poor interaction. Critically, it explores how emerging technologies can provide personal information and target setting for actively improving health, fitness and wellbeing.

Extension activity

Ask learners to think about the places and times where they regularly use technology for extended periods.

How well do they start with their own needs and then fit devices and furniture to support their use?

- Can they reduce it?

- Can they reshape it?

- Are they able to work in different places?

- What do they think the word 'office' means?

Further resources

Wide ranging guidance in understanding and dealing with cyberbullying.	https://www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying/
Wikihow on computer posture.	https://www.wikihow.com/Sit-at-a-Computer
Advice and guidance on digital abuse from Women's Aid.	https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/onlinesafety/
A UK Cyberbullying advice and guidance site.	https://www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying/
Advice from Which? On dealing with nuisance calls and texts.	https://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-deal-with-spam-text-messages
Legal guidance on dealing with trolls and abuse through the web.	https://www.cps.gov.uk/cyber-online-crime

Appendices

Select the links to open the PDFs for the appendices.

Appendix 1 – Managed by technology checklist

Scenario 5: Six positive ways of responding to a group posting

Scenario 6: A netiquette strategy