**Mass Media as a Social Institution**

**Lesson Objectives**

1. Summarize the major developments in the history of mass media.
2. Identify the types of mass media in the United States.
3. Outline some of the contemporary mass-media issues.

**Vocabulary**

Define:

Mass media

Media convergence

Knowledge-gap hypothesis

Digital Divide

Social Capital

Spiral of silence

Agenda setting

Gatekeepers

Opinion leaders

# Article:

# Technology and Friendships

Social competency includes skills like empathy, managing emotions, perspective, cooperation, and social problem-solving skills. We start learning these skills as toddlers and continue throughout life. Research shows that students with good social competence often have healthier personal relationships and perform better academically.

There is conflicting evidence on whether digital life is harming or helping teens develop social competence. Most research suggests that communicating with mobile devices isn’t preventing teens from developing or maintaining close relationships. For most adolescents, frequent online communication has been shown to strengthen the quality of existing relationships.

There are some effects of using technology that are worth looking at more closely, as related to communication skills.

## Indirect Communication

Related to technology, indirect communication refers to any communicating that is not face to face. There has been a great deal of research on human communication. One recent study found that 58 percent of communication is through body language; 35 percent through tone of voice, pitch, and emphasis; and 7 percent through the content. Texting means you miss most of the important cues of communication.

## Low Risk

It takes courage to talk honestly about your feelings and then listen to the other person respond. Finding the words to express intense, complicated, or confusing emotions takes practice. And for people who are shy, introverted, or in some way unable to be active socially, technology offers low-risk ways to connect. Being online and texting removes most of the personal (and thereby, intimidating) aspects of communication. With texting, less is at stake, but you also don’t get to see the effect that your words are having on the other person.

Though most people agree that breaking off a relationship by text is inappropriate, it happens all the time. Sometimes a person will just stop all communication without any apparent explanation and not respond to efforts to communicate, a behavior called ghosting.

## Cyber Bullying

Kids can be incredibly supportive of each other, and they can gang up on each other. This is part of adolescence, but with social media, there are more opportunities and more traps. It’s much easier to text things you would never say directly to someone. Sometimes a quick message is sent without thinking much about its impact. When self-esteem is low or feels threatened, putting other people down gives a false and temporary sense of feeling better. But that’s an endless cycle.

**The Imposter Syndrome**

Teens can feel pressure to be perfect, even when they don’t feel it on the inside. In psychology, this is called the imposter syndrome: when a person feels like a fake, or that others will discover their real hidden self and reject them. When how you feel and how you present aren’t in sync, it can be draining. As teens move into their twenties, they begin to get clearer about who they are and what they believe, and they start to feel better about themselves.

**Stalking (and Being Ignored)**

The conversation never needs to stop, and there’s always something happening somewhere. Four out of five teen phone owners say they sleep with their phone. The fear of missing out can take over. But what if the constant contact gets to be too much? Stalking is a serious subject, but the word gets used casually, too. If someone is really sending way too many texts or harassing messages, tell them to stop, and if they don’t, block them.

Amazingly, it’s also easy to feel lonely in the midst of all the online possibilities. Being in a constant state of waiting, looking at your phone for a reply, can provoke anxiety. That’s a good time to get offline and go do something you are interested in.

1. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of how technology has affected our lives according to the article.