



CONSCIOUS YOUTH BEHAVIOURS.  
IN EMERGING REALITIES

# Non-formal education practices: Hikikomori Syndrome

R2 CYBER TOOLKIT



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<b># 3</b>	<b>We are all Hikikomori</b>
<b>Threat(s)</b>	<b>Hikikomori</b>
	Hikikomori is a phenomenon primarily observed in Japan, characterised by extreme social withdrawal and isolation. Individuals experiencing hikikomori often avoid leaving their homes, engaging in social interactions, or participating in work or school activities for extended periods, sometimes for months or even years. This behaviour is often driven by intense social anxiety, fear of failure, societal pressures, or other mental health issues. Hikikomori has garnered increasing attention due to its impact on individuals' mental health and the broader societal implications of a growing number of young people retreating from public life.
<b>Typology</b>	Narrative storytelling sessions
<b>Duration</b>	180 minutes/3 hours (can be adjusted based on depth of activities)
<b>Modality</b>	In-presence
<b>Aim</b>	This non-formal activity aims to facilitate recognition of the potential for alienation that technology addiction has among adolescents. As a result of participating in this activity, students will understand the risks involved in using technology as an end in itself, in replacing real life with a perpetual retreat into the virtual environment.
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	Critically evaluate the use of technology and its impact on social interactions Adopt healthy online habits. Achieve a balance between virtual and real-world relationships.
<b>Trainee profile</b>	Participants aged 13-18 years, with basic digital navigation skills. No specific pre-requisites, but a curiosity about digital media and online interactions is beneficial.
<b>n° participants</b>	15-20 (ideal for facilitating group discussions and activities)
<b>Materials</b>	Internet-connected devices (laptops/tablets) Projector and screen for presentations Cards with definitions for various forms of avoidance and anxiety Photos related to various forms of social isolation. Flip charts, markers, and sticky notes
<b>Preparation</b>	Search for photos illustrating social isolation. Printing cards with concise definitions for hikikomori and associated conditions. Magazines for photo collages.

	<p>Google Drive folder with pictures.</p>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p>	<p><b>Session 1</b></p> <p>The goal of the session is to help students critically evaluate the use of technology and its impact on social interactions.</p> <p><b>1. Introduction (10min):</b> Watching excerpts from the documentary <b>Japan's taboo: Hikikomori modern-day hermits</b>. 5 minutes will be dedicated to watching the selected clips, the rest of the time will be spent discussing the material. Students are encouraged to share insights regarding the hikikomori cases and to ponder their real-life experience with similar people.</p> <p><b>2. Observation (10 min):</b> The students watch in silence for a couple of minutes the photos of people who appear to be lonely, in distress. They are instructed to avoid moral judgements and only to observe, to pay close attention to every detail from the picture, to try to get into the mind of the character. Each participant is then required to describe the images using only one word, by writing it on a post-it and attaching it to the image.</p> <p><b>3. Story Telling (25 min):</b> The participants will be divided into groups for writing a story based on one photo, using the words from the post-its. The end of the story has to be the moment from the photo, students have to imagine the life of the person from the image, how did it get in that situation.</p> <p><b>4. Reflection/Critical thinking (5 min)</b></p> <p>Is hikikomori just a catchy term for social isolation or does it reflect an entirely new social / psychological problem?</p> <p>Does the proliferation of hikikomori cases reflect an evolution of highly technological societies? That is, once people have enough rewarding alternatives to socialising - games, TV shows to binge, virtual reality, social networks - do they inevitably withdraw from society and refuse to be active and productive members of it?</p> <p><b>Session 2</b></p> <p>The goal of the session is to help participants be aware of the unhealthy online habits and to be cognizant of the healthy online habits.</p> <p><b>1. Group Presentations (20 min):</b> The groups present their stories, the unhealthy habits that led to social isolation will be underlined during the discussions.</p> <p><b>2. Photo collages (20 min):</b> Based on the stories presented previously, students will work in groups to make a photo collage in which they try to describe the world of a person who chooses a secluded life. Disposable magazines are preferred as an inspiration source, but students can also use online apps to create a photo collage. This</p>



	<p>is why a Google Drive with photos should be prepared for the activity, to allow students to use the needed photos without wasting time searching them on the internet.</p> <p><b>3. Reflection/Critical thinking (10 min)</b></p> <p>What are the benefits someone gets from being an hikikomori?</p> <p>What kind of social-emotional competencies do hikikomori people lack?</p> <p>Can contemporary society be considered a culprit for the hikikomori phenomenon, is it in a way the cause because it fails to address the needs of a growing category of people?</p> <p><b>Session 3</b></p> <p>The goal of the session is to suggest ways in achieving a balance between virtual and real-world relationships.</p> <p><b>1. Story Telling (20 min):</b> The participants will continue the story they have been writing during the non-formal activity: this time, they will have to imagine a future for the hikikomori person, a path from isolation and technology addiction to a life filled with passions outside of virtual words and healthy relationships.</p> <p><b>2. Storyboard (20 min):</b> The participants will connect the first story - the one which shows how a person became hikikomori - with the second story - in which the person becomes again an active member of the society, living a meaningful life. In order to achieve this goal, they will draw a succession of images, where they will illustrate how a person became isolated, using recurrent motifs from the photo collages. Afterwards, they will continue the drawings by replacing the images from the photo collages illustrating unhealthy habits with images related to a balanced life, where virtual and real worlds do not exclude themselves, but relate and help the individual to be well integrated in society.</p> <p>All the groups will work together, they will not develop a storyboard for every story, they will try to merge all the stories into a single storyboard.</p> <p><b>3. Reflection/Critical thinking (10 min)</b></p> <p>What are the unhealthiest habits which turn someone into a hikikomori, as the stories presented during session 1 show?</p> <p>How do people manage to regain a balance in their life, as the storyboard from the last session shows?</p>
<p><b>Tips and hints</b></p>	<p>Stress the debilitating effects of loneliness, people are social animals by definition.</p> <p>A difference must be made between anxiety, depression and hikikomori, all lead to isolation, but because of different reasons.</p> <p>A debate will be made about the nature of hikikomori: is it a specific mental condition or rather a cultural syndrome, pertaining to Japanese society?</p>

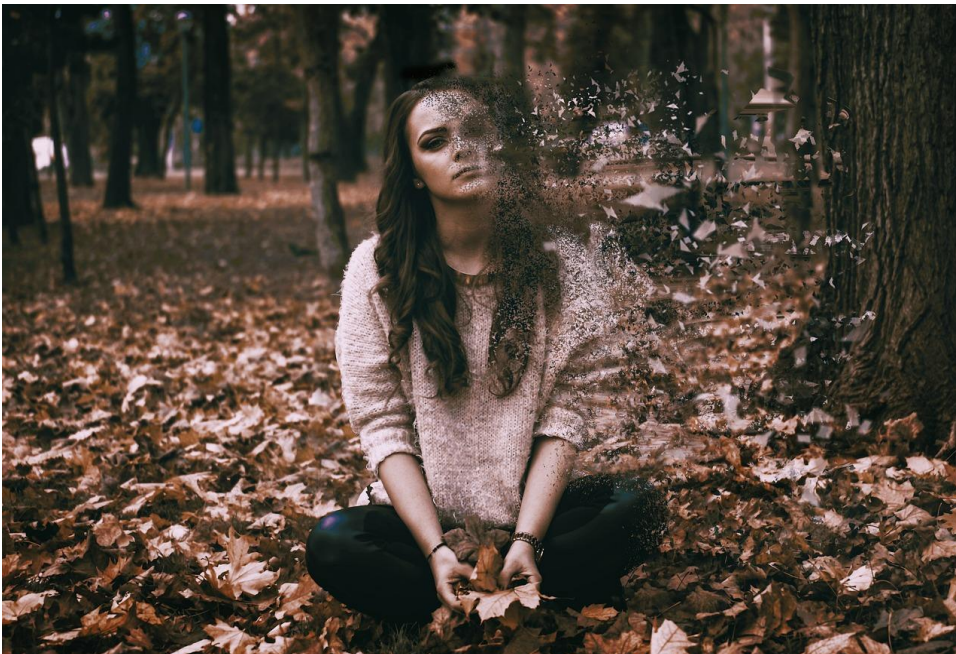


	<p>Hikikomori has been traditionally defined as people choosing a lifestyle centred on living exclusively at home, without social connections, desire to go to school or at work. But there are more and more people who have all the traits of a hikikomori: although they leave their houses, they remain constantly isolated from the world, with a headset on their ears and their eyes glued to the phones.</p> <p>Hikikomori can be framed as a perpetual adolescence, refusal to grow.</p> <p>Hikikomori is hard to overcome because it is ego syntonic, unlike depression and anxiety. People feel good when in this state.</p> <p>A storyboard is a term used in cinematography, where a movie scene is first sketched in a sequence of drawings, before filming it on the actual movie set. When instructing participants to make the storyboard, it is useful to suggest to them to imagine the life of the character from the photo like a movie, where the character arc begins with an initial flawed state, then the story goes on with a call to change, journey to redemption, transformation and growth.</p>
<p><b>Safety measures</b></p>	<p>Ensure internet safety during online activities.</p> <p>Create a respectful and non-judgmental space for discussions.</p>
<p><b>Added value</b></p>	<p>Participants will understand more what drives people to become socially isolated and will become aware of the importance of using technology as a mean towards building friendships and meaningful relationships.</p>
<p><b>External reference and Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Hikikomori documentary:</b> Japan's taboo: Hikikomori modern-day hermits   Reporters • FRANCE 24 English: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFgWy2ifX5s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFgWy2ifX5s</a></p> <p><b>Articles</b></p> <p>Kato, T. A., Kanba, S., &amp; Teo, A. R. (2018). "Defining hikikomori: Current concept and future directions." <i>Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences</i>, 72(6), 427-430.</p> <p>Li, T. M., Wong, P. W. (2015). "Youth social withdrawal behaviour (hikikomori): A systematic review of qualitative and quantitative studies." <i>Australian &amp; New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry</i>, 49(7), 595-609.</p> <p>Teo, A. R., Chen, J. I., Kubo, H., Katsumi, A., &amp; Mathews, C. A. (2018). "Hikikomori: A Hidden Mental Health Need Following the COVID-19 Pandemic." <i>Journal of Mental Health</i>, 27(3), 225-230.</p> <p>Yong, R., Nomura, K. (2019). "Hikikomori is most associated with interpersonal relationships, followed by suicide risk: A secondary analysis of a national cross-sectional study." <i>PLoS ONE</i>, 14(6), e0219637.</p> <p>Rokach, A. (2019). "Hikikomori: Etiology, Symptomatology, and Treatment." <i>American Journal of Psychotherapy</i>, 73(1), 23-31.</p> <p><b>Books</b></p> <p>Zielenziger, M. (2006). "Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation." Anchor Books.</p>

	<p>Tamaki, S. (1998). "Hikikomori: Adolescence without End." University of Minnesota Press.</p> <p>Kawakami, T. (2012). "Hikikomori: The Youth in Withdrawn Society." Kodansha International.</p> <p>Saitō, T. (2013). "Social Isolation and the Phenomenon of Hikikomori in Contemporary Japan." Palgrave Macmillan.</p> <p>Suzuki, T. (2016). "Hikikomori: Understanding the Causes and Treatment."</p> <p><b>Photos</b></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/illustrations/image-manipulation-girl-puppet-3349068/">https://pixabay.com/illustrations/image-manipulation-girl-puppet-3349068/</a></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/photos/woman-alone-crowd-sad-depressed-2666433/">https://pixabay.com/photos/woman-alone-crowd-sad-depressed-2666433/</a></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/photos/fantasy-spirit-nightmare-dream-2847724/">https://pixabay.com/photos/fantasy-spirit-nightmare-dream-2847724/</a></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/vectors/fear-anxiety-depression-woman-6562668/">https://pixabay.com/vectors/fear-anxiety-depression-woman-6562668/</a></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/photos/sadness-depressed-woman-girl-alone-3434515/">https://pixabay.com/photos/sadness-depressed-woman-girl-alone-3434515/</a></p> <p><a href="https://pixabay.com/photos/boy-lonely-asian-sad-alone-child-4658244/">https://pixabay.com/photos/boy-lonely-asian-sad-alone-child-4658244/</a></p> <p><a href="https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-black-t-shirt-lying-on-couch-rmKkZqnVtk4">https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-black-t-shirt-lying-on-couch-rmKkZqnVtk4</a></p>
<b>Feedback and Evaluation</b>	Methods for collecting and evaluating participant feedback to assess the practice's success.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Summary emphasising the significance, effectiveness, and relevance of the practice to the objectives.
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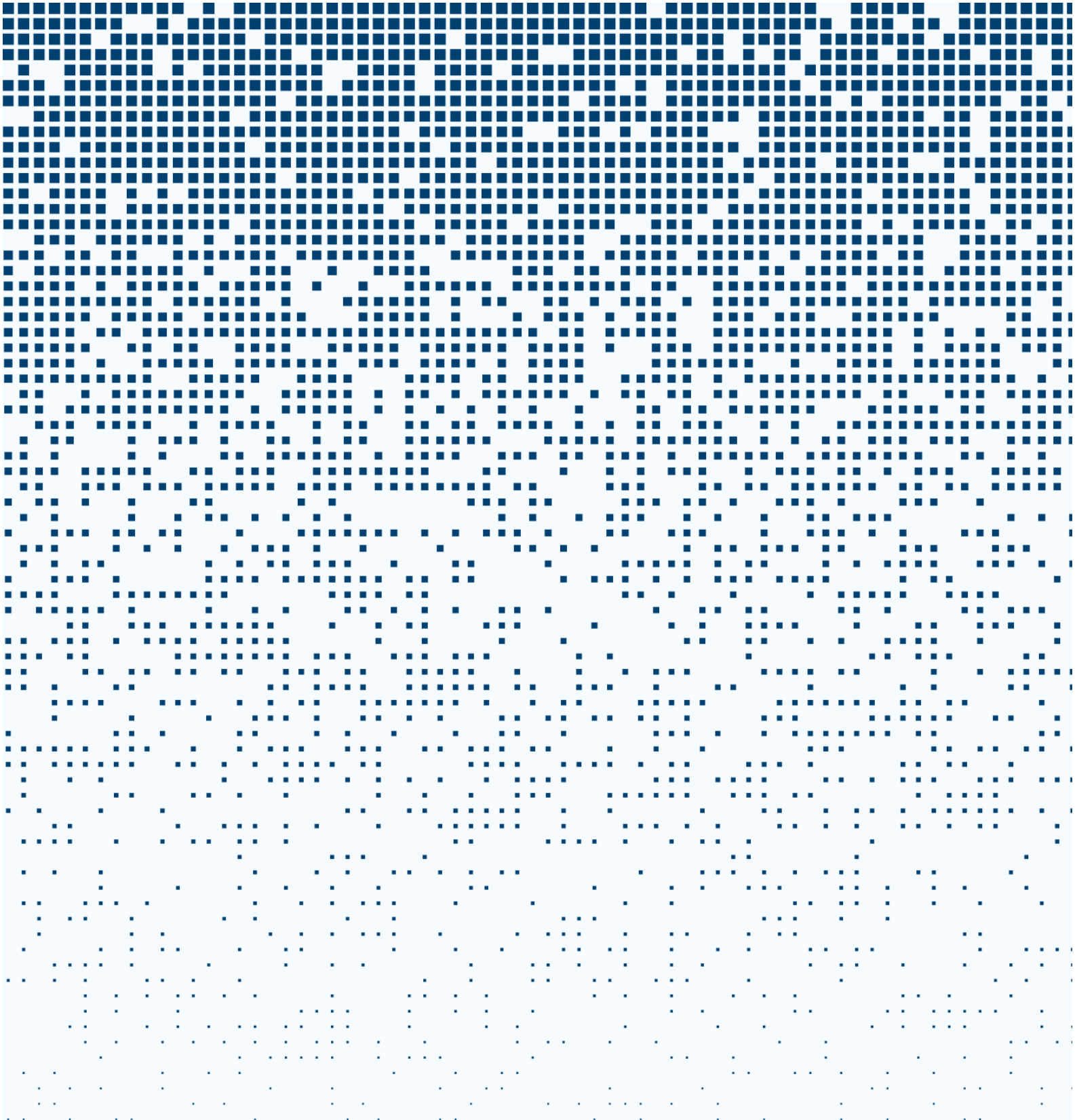




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