

## **The Effects of Social Media on You**

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Most people think of social media as a fantastic innovation that lets people see what others are doing in their lives and lets you show others your life. It is also used to message others and to let you share information, which I always thought was good. I started to think about it and the effects that it has on people, and I wasn't sure anymore. I then started to read into it, and I read about all of the negative side effects that social media has on people near my age. It is a major reason mental illness and depression are so high nowadays and it can lead to a lot of physical illnesses. Kids are getting involved with it early in life and it can lead to a bad homelife for kids and parents. I agree with the articles that I had read about social media being bad for people, especially young adults, and teens.

Teens and young adults nowadays have record high amounts of mental illnesses and depression, there are so many variables that could cause all the problems affecting these people. According to the article, “American Teens Are Really Miserable. Why?” from *The New York Times*, Ross Douthat (2023) the main reason “American teenagers, and especially American teenage girls, are increasingly miserable” is because of social media. I agree with this proposition because I have seen it with the kids in my own school where they get cyber bullied and made fun of over social media and there are not many repercussions if any for cyber bullies. People also care about what others think more now with social media than before because everyone is able to see what they post so they try to make themselves perfect and it is not an achievable goal. In “Is Social Media Bad For Your Mental Health?” from *Middle Georgia State University*, The News Bureau (2022) the author agrees that social media isn’t good for you by stating “Social media use, just as use of alcohol or drugs, can highjack the dopaminergic pathways...and can result in depression, anxiety, and other mental illness.” This statement is saying that social media is like an addiction so it will give users momentary happiness when they get a notification but then is gone again. I have seen this with one of my friends that uses social media constantly and he loves when he uses it but then when he turns off his phone, he says that he is really sad. I have seen this with other people around me and with myself after getting a notification, their face will light up but then it drops almost immediately when they open it.

Since people are trying to be perfect for others on social media, they get very worried about how they look, and they can’t get it just perfect. Douthat (2023) says that social media “makes the general self-consciousness of adolescence feel much more brutal.” Self-consciousness is a very bad thing for a person because it doesn’t let you focus on important things in life other than the way that you look. Many people who are self-conscious tend to try to fix the way that they look in unhealthy ways such as developing Anorexia or Bulimia, so they can get skinnier. These kinds of activities are even worse when the person doing them is still growing up because it can negatively affect their growth. “Here’s How Social Media Affects Your Mental Health” from the Mclean Hospital (2023) agrees with me by saying “the earlier teens start using social media, the greater impact the platforms have on mental health.” This quote is saying that the earlier people start to use social media the more time for damage that can

and will happen to them to affect them. Self-consciousness is not natural for a young teen, but it will develop and progressively get worse over time. Most of the self-consciousness stems from popular users posting and others thinking that that is what they are supposed to be like so when they can't they feel bad about themselves. I have seen this with my friend from earlier in the passage, whenever we go to go swimming, he doesn't like to take off his shirt because he thinks that he is fat. He is 5'10" and around 115lb so he is really skinny, and he thinks he needs to lose weight because of social media.

When people are focused on making themselves look better on social media, they tend to lack strong connections to other aspects of life such as family or relationships. Douthat (2023) talks about this and says that many teens today are "raised with less family stability and weak attachments to religion, with a strong emphasis on self-creation and a strong hostility to 'normativity'". This happens because parents get sucked into social media like the kids do and so the kids don't get the necessary attention that they require. In "Social Media Addiction in Families", Jacquelyn Ekern (2019) Ekern discusses "Parents are more involved on their phones, with work and personal responsibilities blurred. Too often are parents working at home and spending more time on technology than with children or partners." When this happens then the mental health issues can get far worse because they don't have a family to fall back onto, they have hostility. Oftentimes parents that have mental illness from social media will pass on unhealthy behaviors to their children that see their parents and mirror them. Since children often mirror their parents, they can have a much higher chance of having problems with their own mental health and can be worse than their parents'.

With all the mental health that people are having there is a lot of depression that goes along with it as bad thoughts and ideas that most people think are just jokes and not serious thoughts. Suicide is a popular subject on social media as a way to get out of problems or just as a joke. In Douthat (2023) these thoughts and ideas are talked about when Douthat says that social media users are "more likely to entertain suicidal thoughts and act on them, more likely to experience depression, more likely to feel beset by 'persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness,'". I have seen a large rise of mental illness in today's youth, even in my school, I have also seen the rate of depression raise along with it. With all the self-consciousness mixed with mental illness, it makes depression even worse. In the article "Social media use linked to decline in mental health" from *MIT*, Dylan Walsh (2022) says "the suicide rate among 10- to 24-year-olds was stable from 2000 to 2007; it then increased 57% between 2007 and 2017. Given these parallel trends, it's important to understand the relationship between mental health and technology use." These suicide rates can be correlated with the rise of social media, this proves the fact that a large factor of the suicide rates stem from the use of social media in youth.

Social media can be used in a good way but there are harmful side effects from it and people need to be cautious when using it. There is a lot of mental illness and bad mental health that stems from using social media and makes many people self-conscious of themselves. I used to use Snap Chat and Instagram a lot, so it made me self-conscious about what people thought about me and what I posted. I would stress about what people thought of me over social media so I would hardly post because I was afraid of what people would think of me. After around a year

of this I had realized that it was very unhealthy for me, so I deleted them and my mental health much better. The earlier that people use social media the more damage it does to them and since they continually use it earlier in life the more damage it does to our youth. Social media has very negative effects on family relationships for both the children and the parents, it also typically affects the children more than the parents. Suicide rates are linked with the growth rates of social media in the last twenty years because social media decreases mental health and increases the want to commit suicide. I, fortunately, don't use social media much so I don't get the effects that others can get from it, and I am happy that I don't. Now when you are thinking about social media, think, does this have that many good side effects on you?

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