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Social Media Addiction

In today's generation, social media is apart of basically everyone's lives. It wasn't always this way but times have changed for better and for worst. You mostly see teenagers and young adults excessively use social media as some sort of gateway from reality. The standards society sets today for people can make one feel insecure and pressured by things others don't have, especially teenagers. They tend to compare their lives with people who have fancy cars, clothes, etc. & start to believe that that's the best way to live your best life.

To begin, let's start off by saying that social media has its ups and downs. The negative effects are of course the seeking for validation from others and depending on social media for happiness. It's very easy to get caught up in the lifestyle of comparing yourself to others because it's being promoted literally everywhere you look. Some people may call the internet an addiction because the amount of time people spend on it has certainly increased over the past years. Young teenagers today have their own way of showing their personal lives to the world but also secretively. It's called a "finsta" aka a fake instagram. The way this works is the real instagram account includes the filtered pictures & trying to perceive your followers that your life is pretty cool. The "finsta" is the opposite; it's unfiltered, includes jokes, mimiks, memes, real life problems the person goes through, etc. They're motivated to share their personal lives on

instagram because some believe it's "all-about-the-likes". Those who have the "finsta" or even their real instagram account depend on likes to get a drive of happiness. For example, in the *New York Times* article called "The Secret Social Media Lives of Teenagers" shows there is a certain part of your brain that reacts to gaining several likes or followers. In the University of California, researchers found that "the areas of the teens' brains focused on reward processing and social cognition are similarly activated when they think about money and sex—and when they view a photo receiving lots of likes on social media" (Homayoun). This is summed up by saying gaining likes from your peers is similar to thinking about sex and gaining money as well. This example is just one of the many reasons how social media has become such a huge impact in today's world and how common it is for people to think this way.

Social media is a different world where you can be anyone and create an image on how you want to be seen. Although this might have some pros to it, it can also be a dangerous thing. Have you ever asked yourself why you post certain things when you post it? Why do you want people to see what you are posting? Or what will someone benefit from what I posted? Most people don't ask themselves these questions before they post on social media because they don't think it is important, all they want to make sure is that their life seems perfect from the post, videos, and pictures they upload onto the internet. In an article called "social media and self-doubt" by Rae Jacobson she mentions something very important "After a recent spate of college suicides, researchers at Stanford University coined the phrase "duck syndrome." The term refers to the way a duck appears to glide effortlessly across a pond while below the surface its feet work frantically, invisibly struggling to stay afloat. Several students who have died had projected a

perfect image on social media". What people don't understand is it that this "perfect life" that they are portraying on the internet is actually harming themselves and the viewers that they have. A large group that is dealing with this issue are mainly young teenagers, who are now addicted to their phone because they want to see what's going on in everyone's lives. On average a teen spends about nine hours a day online. According to common sense media that a lot of time watching people live their "perfect lives". This begins to have an effect on certain people because they feel like they are behind in life, for the reason that they see everyone on social media doing well.

The first step to getting rid of a growing problem is addressing that you have one. It doesn't have to overcome your life nor does it have to define who you are. Social media addiction is no exception to this. As we've already directed, people can get so caught up in how much of their own happiness and acceptance is reliant on how many 'likes' they get on Instagram or Facebook or the persona they create for attention that they lose sight of the little things that brings them joy that's genuine and, above all else, authentic to them. Whether it's FOMO (fear of missing out) or their lack of self-confidence or respect, it's something that's worth having an intervention over, in my opinion. However, there's a lot of time in the world to turn any problem such as this non-existent. Sophia of The Wisdom Post mentions her article discussing this issue, "If you think that you spend too much of your precious time on social media or perhaps you are addicted to it, not to worry because there are ways to get rid of the bad behavioral issue. Like all other illnesses and problems, there are cures and solutions to social media addiction." It can be controlled in the many ways she listed in the article that prevents the aforementioned negative effects on your

mental health: depression, loneliness, stress, isolation, among other symptoms. The key skill one needs to conquer any social media addiction is self-discipline.

One way to lessen the craving is to simply delete the apps from your phone. By deleting, say, Facebook, not only are you going to miss any update or notifications that most likely don't add any value to your life, but since you're used to opening and scrolling the feed non-consciously, you're essentially rehabilitating your brain *not* to open it. Sophia points out that the only way to use any social media is to go through your computer to do so, which is less accessible, convenient, and desirable than using your phone since it requires more work. However, if you have trouble staying off even on the computer, then the next course of action would be to install a website blocker extension for your browser; there are many to choose from. Some apps can limit your time spent on certain websites (doesn't necessarily have to be social media), from minutes to hours to even weeks; there are some that can block websites permanently (unless you happen to uninstall the app). In my experience, whenever I'm focusing on an assignment I want to get done, I find that using one of these is very helpful to my productivity, such as an app I mainly use (and one that I recommend) is called BlockSite. Another app I use that is actually unique is called Forest. How it works is that you can set a certain amount of time in which you're prohibited from any sites that are blacklisted. The more time you clock in (from 10 minutes to as long as 125 minutes), the healthier and stronger your tree will be, and it'll grow in your own virtual garden. If you visit said blacklisted sites and/or give up, the tree will die and you won't receive any rewards such as coins to buy more trees. She also mentions that whenever time you're not on social media, you can use that said time for other

things that's more valuable, such as exercising, reading, learning to play an instrument, or any other hobby you enjoy.

Lately, there has been a recent trend of people doing what's called a "social media detox", where they abstain from any form of social media for days, weeks, months, and to some, years. This detox has been proven to make people more aware of how much they spent or share their lives. More importantly, it has made them more happier, social, and confident. Youtuber Matt D'Avella imposed a challenge for himself (and his viewers) to withdraw from social media for thirty days. Formerly, he felt that he was constantly being distracted with what new notifications popped up on his phone while working on a project. In his video, "I quit social media for 30 days", he questioned, "Did I actually think that by stepping completely away from social media my entire life would fall apart and people would stop watching my videos? Did I think that I had to keep up by posting every day or else Instagram would banish me to the land of bad algorithms?". He found that by doing this experiment, he spent an average of 23 minutes of screen time per day on his phone, compared to last month where he would spend 98 minutes a day. Halfway through the detox, he also gained the biggest spike in subscribers he'd ever seen. He also spent his time working on his videos or spending time with his family and overall felt more free than when he would check his phone constantly.

Another person named Christina Farr, a journalist for CNBC, also participated in the detox. Originally, she would spend a surprising amount of five hours of screen time on Instagram. Like, Matt, she would constantly check her phone for the latest news or inspiration for meals to cook. The realization that she had spent that amount of time on her phone made her think, "...With five more hours every week, I could read a book, volunteer, spend quality time

with a friend, even learn a new language. Maybe I'd be fluent in French again in six months if I took a break from these apps.", which eventually made her to go on the detox. The result was that she felt lighter and happier; she never felt pressured to post what's going on in her life to fit in with the crowd. She also started to enjoy the little things in her life, such as a great job, wonderful community, and supportive friends.

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