

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

SOCIAL MEDIA - FINDING A HEALTHY BALANCE



MATERIALS

- Journal



DID YOU KNOW

How is social media changing the lives of teens and young adults?

Most adolescents and young adults use social media. This may include YouTube, Instagram, SnapChat, Tik-Tok and other social media platforms. Adolescents report they are using their social media accounts “almost constantly,” and half report being online several times a day for three hours or more.

Brain changes may occur in young adults who are constantly connected to social media. Adolescents and young adults who use social media are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety. One reason is that adolescents and young adults may find themselves in the comparison trap or may encounter cyberbullying. After seeing what others are posting, they may feel that they are not doing enough or are not good enough. They may feel lazy or have negative or distorted thoughts about their appearance. They may fall into a pattern of judging themselves based on what others are posting.

Teen years are a time when youth are trying to discover who they are, feeling a sense of belonging, and seeking validation from peers. They also may have a difficult time figuring out what is perception and what is reality. Youth need to remind themselves that what others post does not always reflect what is actually happening in their lives.

Due to the seriousness and concern about negative effects of social media on the mental health of teens, it is important for youth to learn strategies for a healthier balance with social media use and how to better manage thoughts, feelings, and reactions.



DO

It is hard to break habits of checking SnapChat, Tik-Tok, Instagram or other media sources and constantly refreshing to see more, but it is important to take time away from social media for your mental and physical health. Consider using non-social media apps and digital experiences and rethink how much time you spend on platforms that are not leaving you feeling calm, refreshed, and in a better headspace.

Below are some techniques to try to help manage your use of social media. Keep track of how often you get on social media. What type of media are you using the most? What feelings do you have after being on social media?

Brainstorm ideas to reduce your social media use and write down other activities that you would like to try that bring you joy.

Describe, in writing, ways you are willing to set boundaries and limits with your social media use.



Take a break from social media. This may mean deleting apps from your phone or other devices. You can still have an account, just delete the app.

Practice mindfulness. Notice feelings, emotions, and physical reactions you experience when you read or see something on social media. Pause and take three deep breaths before you respond or react. If something does not make you feel well physically or emotionally, listen to those signs to decide whether or not to keep following that account or person.

Try different ways of connecting with friends and family offline such as going outside for a walk or hike, bicycling, playing sports, shopping together, playing board games or cards together, and eating meals together.

Jot down some of the people, places, pets, and things you are grateful for. Spend time with them instead of social media.

Identify positive qualities and strengths you bring to the world. Consider writing one of these positive affirmations on a sticky-note to hang where you see it often.

Limit using social media at night. Disconnect at least 30-60 minutes before bedtime and plug in your device out of reach so that it is less tempting to check.

Try a couple of the suggestions above for two weeks to assess changes in your mood, feelings, and behavior.



REFLECT

What did you try in the past two weeks?

What surprised you as you practiced reducing social media time?

After trying several different techniques of setting boundaries on your social media use, what worked the best for you?

What was challenging and why? What would you do differently in the future?

What changes did you notice in your mood, feelings, and behavior?



APPLY

New practices usually take several weeks to become habits. Consistency is key. Continue practicing what is working for you and try other techniques when something is not working.

Continue monitoring your feelings, mood, and behaviors related to your social media use.

Share with someone what you learned.

Give suggestions to a friend who may be having a hard time with social media use.



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