

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

February Health Hub

SOCIAL MEDIA & OUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

We all are living in a fast paced and technologically advanced world, with changes happening around us constantly. There are so many things to be done all at once - school, work, social lives, personal wants and needs, the list is never ending. A big part of staying up-to-date and connected through all of the different facets of our lives is through social media. Social media has been a part of connecting with others, especially friends and family members through the pandemic. Through social media, it is possible to connect to others from almost anywhere in the world and at anytime. This has been a wonderful opportunity to temporarily stay connected, but have you ever thought about the long term effects that these digital platforms might have on our life, emotions and connections? It is important to recognize when these tools can be helpful, BUT to what extent of use can make them harmful? Yes, social media platforms can help keep us temporarily connected, but remember that they cannot be a replacement for real-world human connection.



'Like' it or not, using social media can cause anxiety, depression, and other health challenges. How can you change your habits?

Human Nature

As humans, our nature is to be social creatures. We need some sort of companionship, support circle, friends, family, or coworkers to help us thrive in life. The strength of these connections can have a large impact on our mental health and happiness. Being socially connected to others can ease stress, anxiety and depression and in the same breath, boost self-worth, provide us with comfort, joy and even to the extent of adding years to our lives.



If you start identifying that you have or are experiencing these feelings of anxiety, depression, or validation - take a moment to set good, healthy boundaries for the next time you are on social media.

Knowing the Signs of Overuse

Social Media has a rewarding and reinforcing nature about it. Using it activates the brain's 'reward' center by releasing dopamine, a chemical which in turn makes the user feel good. This chemical is also linked to other pleasurable activities such as eating good food and social interaction. Just as many of us are all too familiar with it, these social media platforms can be addictive and they are designed to be exactly that. Overuse of these platforms are associated with side effects such as anxiety, depression and even to the extent of physical ailments.

Social Media plays a large part in everyday communications and updates. It is reported that 72% of the public today uses some type of social media. This puts a large amount of the population at an increased risk of feeling anxious, depressed, or ill due to their over use of social media.

When you find yourself scrolling through social media, have you found yourself thinking the following statements - "Did I get as many likes as _____", or "Why didn't _____ like my post but, I liked theirs" Are you finding yourself searching for validation on these platforms as a replacement for meaningful connection that you can otherwise make in real life?



Setting Healthy Boundaries Starts & Ends With You

We may have positive intentions when using our social media platforms, but excessive use can have a negative impact on our mental health. Set yourself up for success when using social media by setting healthy reasonable boundaries, that work for you!

1. **Give yourself permission to unplug!**

When checking social media starts to feel like a need/requirement, acknowledge that feeling and do something about it. Simply by acknowledging that you give yourself permission to unplug can be very empowering.

2. **Click that UNFOLLOW button.** Cut the ties with the people/organizations that you follow that make you have any unwanted feelings. Do you see a person/organization that makes you doubt your self worth? Unfollow them. If interacting or reading posts from a person or group that brings up feelings of anxiety, depression, or any other unwanted feelings, cut the ties. Allow yourself to no longer be subject to their posts/materials/opinions/thoughts.

3. **Make sure that your time is spent contributing in a positive way.** As we engage in the various social media

platforms, make sure that you are spending your valuable time, building up others. Posting and commenting negative thoughts or ideas do not just harm the target of your posts, it hurts you as well. Even if you are speaking out against something that you do not agree with, you can do so in a positive and constructive way, by offering alternatives rather than criticism.

4. **Set Time Limits.** How much time on a daily basis do you spend on scrolling through social media? What's a reasonable amount of time to spend on social media? Two hours, an hour, thirty minutes...? You have to decide. But once you choose a limit, stick to it! Not only does that help you today, it helps give you a good idea of how much time you are spending and if you want to continually cut back in the future.

How To:

[Set Social Media and App Limits Using Your Phone - Apple Users Edition](#)

[Set Social Media and App Limits Using Your Phone - Android Users Edition](#)

[Register for Social Media & Emotional Health Workshop](#)



Setting Healthy Boundaries

Moderation & Boundaries

Protecting Your Mental Health

Addiction

Filters are Fun, But Also Fake

How to curb unhealthy social media behaviors