Optum

Are you addicted to social media?

Lots of people use social media every day to connect with family and friends and as a hobby. But can people get addicted to it?

There's no such thing as an official diagnosis of "social media addiction." But it's a term people use, because it's more common than ever for people to overuse social media. Some experts estimate up to 10 percent of people in the United States have what's referred to as "social media addiction."

Some experts estimate up to 10 percent of people in the U.S. have an addiction to social media.

Why is social media so easy to overuse?

Social media platforms are engineered by teams of people to be a pleasurable and engaging experience; they are always making improvements and changes to keep the experience new and exciting. When you log on to your favorite apps, dopamine signals in your brain increase. These are associated with pleasure. But the positive feelings experienced during social media use are only temporary, and as the feel-good dopamine wears off.

What are some of the effects of social media overuse?

Engaging in social media once in a while is not harmful. But overuse can lead to:

- Low self-esteem, which is prompted by incorrect perceptions that others' lives are "better" than yours
- Increased isolation and loneliness

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- Anxiety or depression
- Reduced ability to empathize with others

How do you know if you are overusing social media?

A mental health professional can help you determine if you're overusing social media or if it's just something you enjoy. There are some key differences you can look for too:

- Negative effects to your job or schoolwork
- Increased use during other activities, such as hanging out with friends and family
- Increased reliance on social media as a way to cope with problems
- Restlessness and irritability whenever you're not using social media
- Thinking about social media whenever you aren't using it, so much so that it's the first thing you turn to whenever you have the opportunity

If you think you have a problem, how do you decrease use of social media?

There are a number of things they can do:

- Delete your social media apps from your smartphone. While you can still access them from your PC, keeping them off your phone may help decrease the amount of time spent on social media overall.
- Turn off your personal phone during work, school, meals and other activities. You can also adjust the setting on each social media app so you can turn off certain notifications.
- Set aside a certain amount of time dedicated to social media per day. Turn on a timer to help keep you accountable.
- Leave your phone, tablet, and computer out of your bedroom.
- It's also important to take regular breaks from social media altogether to help find some real-life grounding. This can be as long or short as you want. You're in control, not your social media account.

Helpful tip:

Turn off your personal phone during work, school, meals and other activities. Instead, be present with the people and world around you.

Helpful Resources

Family Digital Wellness Guide produced by Boston Children's Hospital's Center on Media and Child Health is available ***here***.

Optum Member Access and Crisis Line – 1-855-202-0973

Idaho Care Line – 2-1-1

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