



SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH: STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY AND BENEFICIAL USE

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Objectives

- Objective 1: Understand the research on social media and mental health.
- Objective 2: Develop skills to promote healthy social media use.

Objective 1

- Objective 1: Understand the research on social media and mental health, including both risks and benefits.

*Social Media: Popular Platforms

- Facebook
- Youtube
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Reddit
- Twitch

*Social media use varies widely, with some preferring more text-based social media and others preferring visual media

“Affordances” of social media vary

Which ones do you use? How many hours do you use social media?

- Facebook
- Youtube
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Reddit
- Twitch

Estimate how many hours
you used social media
yesterday...

What does your smartphone say?

◦ **iOS users:**

- Go to settings on your smartphone
- Scroll down to and select battery
- Select last 24 hours and view the column that says “Battery usage by app”
- Click on “show activity” to get hours of use

◦ **Android users:**

- Open the Settings app
- Tap Digital Wellbeing and Parental Controls
- Dashboard
- Change categories to apps

What did you find?

- We are not great reporters of how much we use our phones and social media
- Social media (and our phones, in general) are designed to keep us engaged with content.
- Why does this happen?

Addictive design--why it's hard to put down phones

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EY13xhNYsJw> (through 4:10)

So, what does this mean about our health and wellbeing?

- How we spend our time impacts our mood, thoughts, and behaviors
- We can choose how to spend our free time in ways that maximizes our wellbeing and happiness, and aligns with our values

Key Components of Wellbeing

- **What do we need for emotion regulation or to help us be successful?**

- Activities that bring us positive emotions
- Adequate sleep (7+ hours for adults; 8-10 hours for teens)
- Physical activity
- Experiences where we feel successful/have mastery
- Taking actions that are in line with our values

- **What does social media have to do with this?**

- Content
- Context
- Type of use

Content: how has social media impacted you/your friends or family?

- Take a moment and think about how social media use has benefitted you or someone you know in the past week. Examples can include:
 - Watching a funny video that made you laugh
 - Learning about a new artist and their music
 - Connecting with friends or family
 - What else?
- Now, think about a time when using social media created stress for you or someone you know...what comes to mind?

Context: When/where do we use social media?

- Around bedtime/in the bedroom
- What activities are being displaced?

How do we use social media?

- Passive vs. active use
- Seeking community/connection
- Seeking likes/followers/social status or editing photos to improve one's appearance
- Seeking healthy content vs. content that is triggering or risk-promoting

Summary slide

- Social media can contribute to both positive experiences/wellbeing and negative experiences/illbeing
- We can maximize positive social media experiences by:
 - Ensuring that our social media use doesn't interfere with what we need for wellbeing (e.g., sleep, activities that bring us joy, etc.)
 - Being intentional about how we use social media so that we are living according to our values

Objective 2: Develop skills to promote healthy social media use/digital wellbeing

Healthy social media use

- **Does social media use (or phone use in general) get in the way of (or increase) what we need for wellbeing?**
 - Activities that bring us positive emotions
 - Adequate sleep (7+ hours for adults; 8-10 hours for teens)
 - Physical activity
 - Experiences where we feel successful/have mastery
- **Is our social media use in line with what we value?**
- **Do we feel confident in coping with online stress?**

Addressing content concerns

- To enhance your digital wellbeing, first consider what you value.
- What is important to you? Review the values card sort document (Center for Digital Thriving at Harvard Graduate School of Education, in partnership with Common Sense Education).
- Choose the three values that are most important to you

Help with accessing value-affirming content

- Be selective about who you follow and who follows you; search for content that is affirming, supportive, or uplifting.
- Does the content you consume align with your values?
- Example: I value emotional health, justice, and connectedness. However, I follow influencers whose content largely consists of emphasizing products or advertising.
- Seeing this type of content does not match my values—it will not promote my mental health or wellbeing. I can change whose content I see that is more in line with my values.

Context of use: When/where is best for you?

- Consider my values of emotional health and connection. How does my late night use of social media enhance or diminish living according to my values?
- In a typical day, what times or settings could you use social media that would work best for you and your values?
- Are there consequences to using social media at different times for you?
- Experiment with changing when you use social media and see if you notice a difference.

Coping with online stressors

- What are some common online stressors?
 - Cyber-bullying/cyber-victimization
 - Missing out or being left out
 - Others?

What can we do when facing an online stressor?

- Enhance coping skills around negative social media interactions; seek offline support from friends and family. DM individuals who are part of your support system
- Communicate with friends and family about use.
- Identify what you enjoy about social media and be mindful of when your phone use or social media use brings more negativity (than positivity) in your life.

Additional resources

- <https://www.pinterest.org/youth-and-social-media/>
- <https://digitalthriving.gse.harvard.edu/>
- <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/>
- <https://www.common sense media.org/>

Thank you!

Contact information & resources request:

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