



Strategies for Managing Social Media's Effects on Mental Health



High social media use can negatively impact mental health and behavior, which can lead to diminished productivity, academic challenges, and distress. Common reasons to spend time using social media include:

- Boredom
- Loneliness
- News/current events
- Distraction
- Flirting/sexual contact
- Social activism
- To see what others have posted
- Mental/emotional break
- Look up celebrities, brands, etc.
- Interact and chat with people

Common effects of social media use include:

- Increased anxiety
- Interrupted sleep
- Difficulty focusing
- Loneliness
- Low/lack of motivation
- Racing thoughts/mind
- Comparisons to others
- Negative outlook on life
- Sadness & depression
- Procrastination
- Lethargy/feeling drained
- Negative self-perception
- Misuse/loss of time
- Anger, frustration, & fear
- Guilt



Understanding Social Media

Social media companies have business goals to achieve, including user growth and increasing screen time. As a result, the features and designs of apps are built to be addictive. Common strategies developers use include an irregular stream of notifications to keep your interest peaked and algorithms that learn your interests and present what keeps you engaged.

After a certain amount of exposure to these strategies you stop having full control of your brain, and it's easy to fall prey to the addictive features.



Strategies for Change

As you evaluate your social media use, think about:

- How do you feel using social media apps? What about them brings you joy, and what brings discomfort?
 - How much time out of your day/week do you dedicate to social media?
 - When do you **not** want to be on apps? Be specific.
- Which mental and emotional states do you want to cultivate more of? How about less of?
 - How do different apps and activities contribute to those mental and emotional states you want more or less of?
 - What are some alternative activities you can turn to when you're bored or feeling lonely?

Tips to regain control and create change:

- Turn off notifications
- Unfollow or mute accounts that have a negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing
- Delete the apps and only login on a browser
- Change your phone's screen to black and white
- Set time limits and schedules for app use
- Use apps like ScreenZen that help you pause when you open an app
- Take a day or weekend break from social media
- Post less and delete accounts you use infrequently

Practice patience and self-compassion during this process. Shifting habits can be challenging and takes time and effort. Be careful not to internalize setbacks as your personal failures or shortcomings. Remember, social media apps are designed to be addicting!



SEATTLE

CAPS

Counseling and Psychological Services



Graphics designed by
Austin Sandford