**SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY A ROLE IN DEPRESSION**

Roughly 4 billion people across the world use networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. While social media has never been more popular, with more than half of the world's population active on networking sites, research suggests that social media may trigger depression.

Limiting time on social media and prioritizing real-world connections can be beneficial to mental health. Indeed, a landmark study found that the less people used social media, the less depressed and lonely they felt.

To establish the link between social media and depression, the researchers assigned 143 University of Pennsylvania students to two groups: one could use social media with no restrictions, while the second group had their social media access limited to just 30 minutes on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat combined over a three-week period.

The group with restricted social media access reported lower severity of depression and loneliness than they had at the beginning of the study.

Researchers suggest that these young people were spared from looking at content—such as a friend’s beach vacation, grad school acceptance letter, or happy family—that might make them feel bad about themselves.

Taking in the photos or posts of people with seemingly “perfect” lives can make social media users feel like they just don’t measure up. So regular Facebook users are more likely to develop depression if they feel feelings of envy on the networking site.

Social media can also give users a case of Fear Of Missing Out. For example, if their friend didn’t ask them on a trip, users might feel hurt and left out to see that others in their social circle were. It can lead them to question their friendships or their own self-worth.

Social media users who visit an ex’s social media page and see pictures of their former partner dining with a new lover may wonder why their ex never took them to such fancy restaurants. So limiting one’s time on social media can mean less time spent comparing oneself to others and so not thinking badly of oneself and developing the symptoms that contribute to depression.

Moreover, social media has given bullies a new way to torment their victims. With just one click, bullies can circulate a video of their target being ridiculed, beaten up, or otherwise humiliated. People can leave negative comments or spread misinformation on a peer’s social media page. In some cases, victims of bullying have committed suicide, fearing that the bullying would increase if they spoke to a parent or teacher about their mistreatment.

Finally, the habit of reading bad news on social media sites or elsewhere online is known as “doomscrolling,” and it can adversely affect one’s mental health, leading to depression symptoms.

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