

Social Media Addiction

A Guide to Mindful Social Media Use



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Introduction



Social media has become an important part of everyday life, influencing how we communicate, connect with others, access information, and spend our free time. While these platforms offer many benefits, they can also create challenges when they start to affect our routines, relationships, responsibilities, or overall well-being. With technology always evolving, understanding how our digital habits can influence our lives is more important than ever. Through this toolkit, let's explore the relationship between social media and our daily lives, the potential concerns associated with excessive use, and practical strategies for developing healthier digital habits.



What is social media addiction?

As defined by the literature study
*Understanding Social Media Addiction: A
Deep Dive* by Jashvini Amirthalingam and
Anika Khera:

**"Social media addiction is
characterized by excessive and
compulsive usage that affects daily
functioning and overall well-being."**

**"It encompasses more than just spending an
excessive amount of time online; it involves
compulsively checking for updates, feeling
anxious when offline, and suffering from
negative impacts on real-life relationships
and responsibilities."**

Why is it a problem?



When using technology, a neurotransmitter called dopamine is released which is associated with motivation, reward, and pleasure; otherwise known as the “feel-good” chemical. Social media platforms are designed to provide frequent rewards through likes, comments, notifications, and new content, which can trigger the brain’s reward system and keep users scrolling. Over time, cycle of reward can make it more difficult to regulate social media use and may lead to further compulsive habits.

Excessive social media use can start to interfere with important aspects of everyday life, which can include sleep, school or work and relationships. Constantly checking social media can also make it more difficult to focus on tasks and be present in real-life interactions. When online activity starts to take priority over responsibilities and healthy routines, social media use can become a significant issue.



Statistics / Research



According to addictionhelp.com, "...research from the University of Michigan, an estimated 210 million people worldwide suffer from addiction to social media and the internet."

According to Statista, "rates of self-reported social media addiction by age group include:

18 to 22 years old: 40% of Americans self-reported being addicted to social media

23 to 38 years old: 37% of Americans self-reported being addicted to social media

38 to 54 years old: 26% of Americans self-reported being addicted to social media

55 to 64 years old: 21% of Americans self-reported being addicted to social media."



In regards to US statistics, California State University reports an estimated "10% or 33.19 million Americans are addicted to social media compared to the average person."



Addiction Among Adolescents



This issue is especially significant during adolescence, a critical period for developing identity, friendships, and self-esteem. The pressure to fit in, keep up with peers, and receive likes or comments can encourage excessive use, while comparing themselves to others can make these habits seem normal. With nearly unlimited access to social media, scrolling can become an automatic form of entertainment and escape, taking time away from schoolwork, sleep, relationships, and other responsibilities.

In today's world, adolescents are growing up with smartphones and digital communication as a normal part of everyday life. Constant access to technology provides an easy escape from the stress and responsibilities of school, especially for older students. Social media offers an immediate sense of relaxation and reward, making it tempting to scroll instead of completing homework or other tasks. Over time, this can make kids more impatient with boredom or difficult tasks, leading to procrastination and unfinished responsibilities.



Adolescent Statistics



According to the World Health Organization (Europe), "A third (34%) of adolescents played digital games daily, with more than 1 in 5 (22%) playing for at least 4 hours on days when they engage in gaming. 12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, with boys more likely than girls to show signs of problematic gaming (16% vs 7%)."



"More than 1 in 10 adolescents (11%) showed signs of problematic social media behaviour, struggling to control their use and experiencing negative consequences. Girls reported higher levels of problematic social media use than boys (13% vs 9%)."



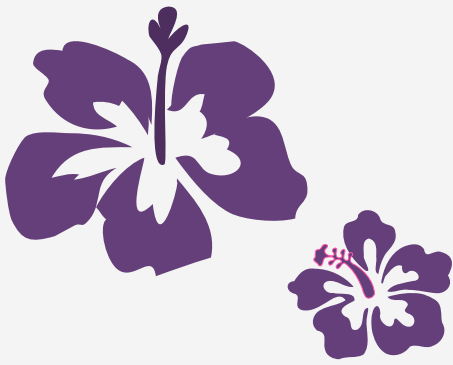
"Over a third (36%) of young people reported constant contact with friends online, with the highest rates among 15-year-old girls (44%)."

Tips for Parents

Parents play a crucial role in helping children develop healthy and balanced digital habits. Rather than completely restricting social media, setting reasonable boundaries and encouraging open communication can help kids learn to manage their screen time responsibly. The following video from the American Psychological Association (APA) helps provide practical tips and guidance for parents on managing children's social media use.



Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7zmz0tZ1Xk>



Strategies to Combat

1

Having device-free zones

- Keep phone out of your bedroom overnight
- Charge it in living room
- Use a traditional alarm clock

2

Turn off notifications

- Disable all unimportant alerts to prevent unnecessary triggers
- Utilize app blockers when appropriate

3

Declutter your home screen

- Hide social apps in folders or delete them entirely from your phone, which forces you to use web browsers or other devices when strictly needed

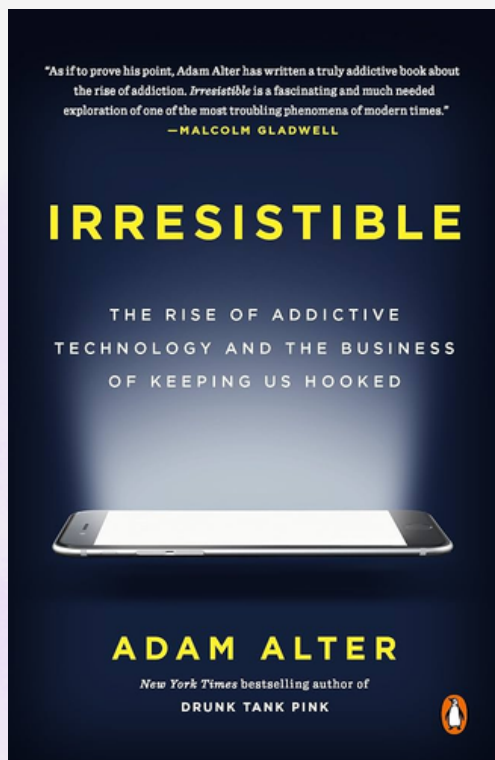
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Swap short-form content for long-form

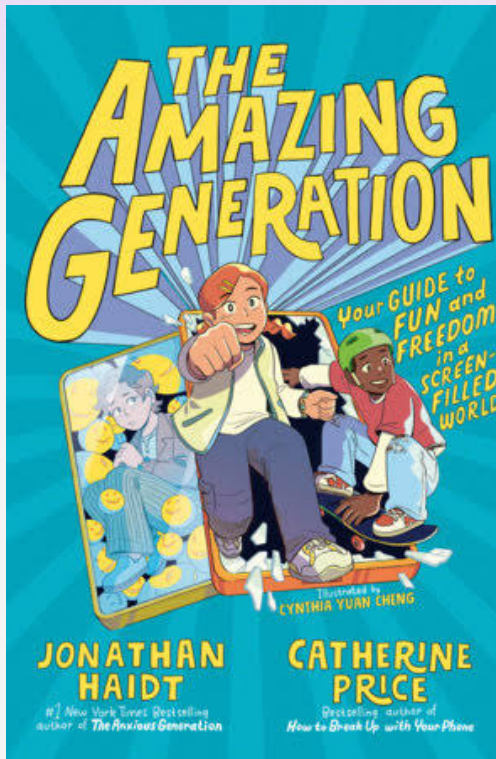
- Watch a movie or read a book
- Helps brain relax instead of hunting for constant micro-dopamine hits that come from infinite scrolling

Additional Resources

The Social Dilemma is a 2020 Netflix docudrama where major tech experts bring awareness to the psychological impacts of social media platforms.

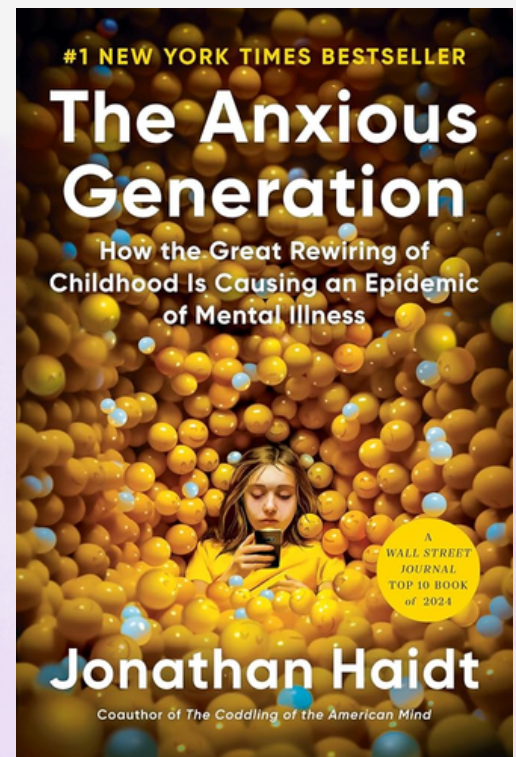


Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked is a book written by Adam Alter that explains how digital devices and tech businesses exploit human psychology and keep us hooked to screens.



A great option for younger kids is *The Amazing Generation: Your Guide to Fun and Freedom in a Screen-Filled World* by Jonathan Haidt and Catherine Price, which uses a mix of storytelling and conventional text to help kids reclaim their time from screens!

The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness by Jonathan Haidt offers perspective into childhoods with technology vs. without and how it shapes mental health in adolescents.



Conclusion

Overall, social media isn't bad, and simply using it doesn't constitute it as an addiction. Social media is a great tool for interacting, sharing knowledge, and learning from others. However, when online engagement begins to interfere with important areas of your life, such as academics, relationships, sleep, or mental well-being, it becomes necessary to reevaluate one's digital habits. Completely banning social media is not necessarily the most effective solution; it's better to develop healthy boundaries and learn to regulate usage, which can promote a more balanced relationship with technology.

This issue is particularly significant among adolescents, who may be more vulnerable to developing unhealthy patterns of social media use due to usage since a young age, influence of peers, and the desire for social acceptance. Teaching young people how to recognize excessive use and establish healthy limits can help prevent social media from negatively affecting their daily lives and maintain balance. Ultimately, the goal should not be to eliminate social media, but to encourage mindful and responsible use that allows individuals to benefit from its advantages without becoming overly dependent on it.

References



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<https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/how-to-use-social-media-healthfully/>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/behavioral-addictions/social-media-addiction/>

Author's Note

This toolkit is brought to you by NAMI Mercer and was created by Dhaniya Venkat. Hopefully, you gained more insight into this topic or learned helpful tips. As technology gets more and more advanced, it's important we learn how to use it responsibly and maintain a healthy balance between our digital and offline lives.



Thank you!

The logo for NAMI Mercer is centered on the page. It consists of a light blue circle containing a stylized, darker blue graphic of a person's arms raised in a gesture of support or celebration. Overlaid on this graphic is the text "nami" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, and "Mercer" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font, both in a dark blue color.

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resources, visit namimercer.org

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