

Maintenance of normal social life and not giving in to society's pressure

[Science](#), [Computer Science](#)



Society's pressure to share intimate details of our lives on social media has increased stress on our mental health. David Foster Wallace illustrates in "This is Water" how society has encouraged individual's belief that they are the center of attention, and "...[their] immediate needs and feelings are what should determine the world's priorities". However, throughout Wallace's speech he attempts to educate readers that if you choose to avoid this way of thinking it will lead to a more fulfilling life. In Clive Thompson's article "Brave New World of Digital Intimacy" he indicates with the rise in popularity of social media and microblogging individuals can now maintain acquaintances who otherwise would have "faded from their attention" (Thompson). With these benefits of social media there are pitfalls an individual can fall into. Thompson discusses that these pitfalls can put a strain on an individual's mental health but with the use of smart blogging members can maintain a balance with social media and reality while pursuing the good life.

From the moment people in our society reach adolescent they start to experience social pressure on how they should live, act, feel and think. Society has programmed individuals to believe that if you live and act a certain way then everything will "all be about you" which causes individuals to be self-centered. With the use of technology and social media it makes it easier than ever to share details of our lives with a goal of receiving positive attention from others, this feeds the craving of "the worship of self" mentality. This type of mentality causes individuals to get angry or frustrated at the slightest inconvenience that happens in their lives, such as getting stuck

in traffic or having to wait in line at Starbucks while there are screaming children nearby.

David Foster Wallace explains that this type of frustration is caused by our “default-setting”. Wallace uses an example of how individuals can get frustrated at the lightest of things because its inconveniencing them such as dealing with a large crowd at a grocery store. Wallace states “if [we] don’t make a conscious decision about how to think and what to pay attention to, [we are] going to be pissed and miserable every time [we] have to food-shop, because [our] natural default-setting is the certainty that situations like this are really all about me”. Wallace explains that the “default-setting” is living a life that may be prosperous because we are following what society has programmed us to do but that it is ultimately “dead, unconscious...to your natural default-setting of being uniquely, completely, imperially alone, day in and day out.”.

However, an individual can make a conscious choice to deviate from the “default-setting” by taking a step back realizing that getting the most “likes” on your profile picture is not the most important thing in the world but volunteering your time to help others around you, caring about others, its what truly matters. Its not to say that social media is evil, but individuals need to learn to find balance. They need to find what David Foster Wallace calls “The capital-T Truth”, the “simple awareness – awareness of what is so real and essential...”. Once an individual can distinguish what is real and essential they will be able to find the good life.

Finding balance with social media and reality to maintain a healthy mental state is a topic that Clive Thompson discusses in his article “ Brave New World of Digital Intimacy”. There are several benefits with using social media and pitfalls a member can fall into that will put a strain on their mental health. Individuals can now maintain acquaintances who would otherwise have faded from their mind, Clive Thompson refers to this type of relationship as “ weak ties”. With social media applications such as Facebook, if an individual meets someone at a party or work event they can “ friend” them. Now whenever an acquaintance posts a personal note or “ likes” a photo on their “ News Feed”, they are reminded that this person exists.

Mark Zuckerberg developed the News Feed software that broadcasts any activity of friends on a user’s page without them having to search to find updates. With this easy to use software, users can fall into a trap of following activities of people who only consider them acquaintances, this gives the user a false reality that they have a relationship; making it harder for them to maintain long lasting friends with mutual interests and feelings for each other. Clive Thompson states “ if you’re reading daily updates from hundreds of people about whom they’re dating and whether they’re happy, it might, some critics worry, spread your emotional energy too thin, leaving less for true intimate relationships.” (Thompson). This type of obsession can cause individuals to follow someone’s daily activity so much that they start to believe they have a intimate relationship with that person who in reality may be unaware that they exist.

This false sense of intimate relationship with someone who in reality does not know that you exist is called Parasocial relationship. Clive Thompson talks about how “ Parasocial relationships can use up some of the emotional space in our Dunbar number, crowding out real-life people” (Thompson). The Dunbar number is the total number of social bonds a human can maintain with a healthy balance. When an individual starts to exceed their Dunbar number, they start to spread their emotional energy too thin which causes depression and other mental illnesses. With proper balance an individual can find positive uses with social media such as being able to solve a problem by posting it on their News feed. A member’s “ weak ties” would be able to assist with helping them solve the problem. A way to help maintain balance is for a person to smart blog, Thompson explains smart blogging as “...a strategy many people told me they used: one account for their weak ties, one for their deeper relationships” (Thompson). By balancing social life with social media, a person can a healthy state of mind and be able to focus on pursuing the fulfilling life.

Thus, it is possible for an individual to maintain a normal, social life and not lose themselves in society’s social pressure. David Foster Wallace in *This is Water* and Clive Thompson’s article “ Brave New World of Digital Intimacy”, have established that if an individual maintains awareness of what is real and essential and finds balance that they will be able to enjoy life in the pursuit of the good life.