

My views on social media's negative effect on teenagers

[Media](#), [Social Media](#)



I feel the vibration of my phone in my pocket as I'm sitting in class. I know I'm supposed to be paying attention to the teacher, but my mind wanders off. Who is texting me? What video was just posted on YouTube? Who posted something on Snapchat? These questions consume my thoughts in my ENC 1101 class. I am not the only one who falls victim to this chain reaction. In today's generation, we are glued to technology- especially cell phones. The culprit behind this is two words: social media. " Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration". Some prominent examples include: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Google+. It has some positive traits such as allowing people from all around to interconnect. But, overall social media has a negative effect on teenagers.

Most of us would deny that we have are addicted when it comes to the use of social media. Although we spend hours on end scrolling and liking post, texting nonstop, and checking our phones a million times, we don't have a " problem". At this stage in life, we feel the need to " keep in contact" with people we see everyday. The need to post every little thing that happens in our life. The need to text rather than talk to people. As a result, we become an addict. This addiction goes as far as affecting our sleep in some cases. " Roughly 10% of teens check their phones more than 10 times a night". This means while they are supposed to be sleeping, their minds are fixated on all things social media. This can lead to a lack of sleep, which have many negative effects of its own. Furthermore, it also distracts students from their school work. Researchers found that participants with their phones in another room significantly outperformed those with their phones on the

desk, and they also slightly outperformed those participants who had kept their phones in a pocket or bag. So when a phone is within reach, whether the person knows it or not, they are distracted. When they are supposed to be learning, they are focused on what is happening on their phone. As a result, they don't perform as well as they could. This leads to lower grades on tests and various assignments. Addiction is a serious thing that many of us fail to acknowledge, and who knew it could come from our very own pockets.

One day, I went to a friend's house and I observed a strange thing. Her older brother texted her on Snapchat, from the room right next to her, to get him water. She let me know that in her family instead of telling each other what they need directly, they call or text each other. First off, how lazy can you be? But that's besides the point. Although this is foreign and uncommon in my family, I see this all time. Friends texting each other when they are sitting right next to each other, guys sliding into DMs instead of directly going to the girl they're interested in, etc. Social media is a factor in our lack of social interaction. Personally, when I text someone I'm more comfortable to be myself. Whereas, in person I shut down and I experience social anxiety. When I am put in situations where I have to speak to someone face to face, I shut down. This can be described as "avoidant" behavior. "Social media does a very good job at letting you hide... social media is a technological ticket to utilizing escapism as a coping mechanism for social anxiety" (Miller). We tend to shield ourselves behind social media, to avoid certain things. Rejection, nervousness, and confrontation are things that we don't

like to face. At the end of the day, these experiences help shape who we are and how we will react if we are placed in that situation again. Additionally, it helps us learn how to talk to new people. Since we're always texting, it is easier to get a quick, instant response, which leads to a lack of social skills. Essentially, we forget how to engage in conversations. " People are not having these intimate conversations and personal interactions with each other anymore". Now, people use the Internet and social media to help alleviate some of the nervousness we all have when communicating with others. We are now faced with a generation, of impatient, antisocial, and anxious people.

Being able to contact your friends outside of school is one of the greatest benefits of social media. There are days when I'm really bored and knowing that my friends are a call or text away makes my worries go away. But this constant connectivity between people in school and outside of school can be a negative thing. When I was in the 7th grade I signed up for " Kik Messenger", which is an instant messaging app. I signed up so I can talk to more of my friends from school, and for a while it was great... until it wasn't. There were a few girls in my school that had a problem with me and wanted to fight me. I ignored it but the bullying and harassment continued online. Everyday they would say the meanest things to the point it broke my spirit. I became withdrawn and very depressed. The torment that I faced was inescapable. In school they would bother me, then my sanctuary I called home was no longer a safe haven. This is when I had enough. One day after school, I decided that I would take my own life. " No one cares, no one will

me miss me”, I thought. I took a razor blade from my moms room and went into the bathroom. There I stood with a tear-stained face holding the blade against my wrist. “ Maybe all the pain will go away, I’m tired of no one caring”, I thought. Yet, I was scared and I was hesitating to do it. All of sudden, my mind was filled clarity. I didn’t want to do this, I couldn’t do it. In that moment God himself saved me, but not everyone is this lucky.

We all know about the case of Amanda Todd, and how she couldn’t escape the bullying. From being bullied and blackmailed online to getting into physical altercations with kids at her school, she felt that suicide was the only option. There are countless examples of people who took their own lives because they couldn’t get away from the bullying. Social media contributes to the rise of suicide amongst teens due to to the cyberbullying that takes place. Some might argue that you should report it, tell an adult, or simply not go on the sites. But that’s easier said than done, “ by 2015, 87 percent [of teenagers] used social media every day or nearly every day. They were 14 percent more likely to be depressed than those who used social media less frequently”. The daily use of social media exposes these teen to negative behaviors that affect them in numerous ways. We constantly see people talking about the appearance of others, we worry about how many likes and followers we have, and trying to achieve praise from others. We could disconnect from social media, but that can isolate the individual and make them feel alone. In the case of 15 year old Sadie Riggs, the bullying she experienced in person and online led to her demise. Her parents removed the option of using social media, but unfortunately it was too late. “

So finally I smashed her phone. I broke it in half. She was bawling every day and I couldn't take it anymore." But the bullying had already taken its toll. On June 19, barely a week after Smith took her phone, Sadie hanged herself". Therefore, there's not an exact science of how much or how little a person should dedicate to social media. This leaves teens in a limbo that is hard to break free from. Sadly, the damage can be done already, leaving these teens in a dark place that is hard to break out of.

All in all, social media was created to allow us to interconnect, but it is doing more harm than good for teenagers. From suicide, lack of sleep, and lack of social skills, I'm beginning to wonder why we all continue to use social media. Although, we connect with people we can't physically be with everyday, the negatives outweigh the positives. This leads to a major question. Who is held accountable for these negative effects that teens may face? The parents, the teen, the schools, or the social media site. These networking sites swear to protect the privacy of its user, but they fail to do so. While Mark Zuckerberg is starting to receive attention, a majority get off scotch free. Who knew that all these consequences are one click away?