



Here's why  
youngsters  
shouldn't get  
addicted to...

# The Drug Called Social Media

**H**ow often have you clicked on the link to a cute puppy video shared by your friend on Facebook only to find yourself watching how to make birdcalls an hour later? How often has that one extra scroll on Instagram possibly led to you stalking your kindergarten teacher you had completely forgotten? If you can relate to any of these statements, then we're afraid social media has become a drug for you.

### Let's Psychoanalyse This

An average teenager spends over eight hours every single day on social media platforms,

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where Facebook and YouTube bag the top two spots for the most time spent on. **Dr Seema Hingorrany**, a renowned psychologist based in Mumbai, tells us all about the repercussions of social media on today's youth, and how to address the issue.

- "Firstly, too much time spent on social media leads to cognitive information overloading, i.e. too much information goes into the brain, which the brain is not able to filter properly. This is similar to a pipe being clogged," says Dr Seema.
- Secondly, we all need a time out from the hustle-bustle of our daily lives, and social media provides the much-needed relief. But what we see in today's youth, especially those spending too much time on social media, is that they're not grounded. They are talking too fast, they're always too hyper, and find themselves getting easily agitated or irritated. There is no such thing as pausing in today's young adults.
- Thirdly, these people are out of sync with their surroundings. They're constantly checking their phone even during dinner with their families. They are not in tune with their own family members, all of which leads to a destructive change in thought processes and personality.
- Fourthly, there's development of sleep disorders because most teenagers spend their time on social media till





the wee hours of the morning, and end up sleeping for less than four to five hours, which leads to grogginess, irritation, migraines and sleep disorders.

## Social Media And Depression

Studies have also shown that the overall experience on social media actually leaves people feeling more depressed, yet they continue to go back to it for just 'two more minutes'. It's almost like an addiction to a so-called drug. Why does this happen?

One word: Validation. "According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we grow up seeking validation, but there must come a time when we must learn to validate ourselves. Many teenagers do not realise that there is something known as self-validation, as they turn to their

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Instagram posts and Twitter tweets to seek validation from others all the time. But if a teenager is relentlessly seeking validation or recognition via their time spent on social media, it shows that he/she

is actually low on self-esteem. Psychologically speaking, there is a thin line between getting validated and getting obsessed. Unfortunately, most teenagers and young adults today have found themselves crossing that line," explains Dr Seema.

They are continuously showing off how great their lives are on their social media platforms, and their minds are constantly whining on how to one up their account in comparison to their friends' accounts. A picture posted once in a while is fine, but going back every five or 10 minutes to check how many people have liked or commented on it becomes a problem because it invariably leads to depression if they don't get as many likes as they would have expected, or gives them a small high if their post was well-received, leading them to upload one more post and the cycle starts all over again.

In fact, they are always in preparation of their next post, and so much time is spent just thinking about their social media profiles that they realise all too late that they haven't actually done anything meaningful or worthwhile with their time. Procrastination, which was earlier just a concept, has now become a rather horrifying reality.

## So How Do We Fix This?

Now that we've discussed how bad social media can actually be for our mental health, let's talk about what we can do to minimise its negative effects on



us. Because, let's face it, social media has become an integral part of our lives. Here are a few tips Dr Hingomany suggests:

- Get your priorities in check. Cultivate this discipline. Develop a habit of restricting your time spent on social media every day.
- When you cut down on your time spent on social media, use that extra time you get to develop productive habits like walking, running, swimming, reading at a library or bookstore or playing games like Sudoku or solving crossword puzzles to develop your cognitive thinking.
- Do not seek validation on social media, you won't get any. If you put up a post, forget about it for some time, turn off your notifications. This way you will not seek

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instant gratification as that cannot be numbered in terms of likes.

- When meeting a group of friends or having a meal

with your family, put your phone on silent mode and keep it aside. Engage in real life conversations that will develop your personality. These moments will not come back.

- Observe people you find successful in life. These people do not spend much time online, because they have realised that social media actually hinders their productivity. These people are also high in self-esteem, something we must all aim to achieve.
- The people you follow on social media are important too. Follow your role models, and learn from them. The right influencer will not instigate feelings of envy or jealousy in you, but will rather uplift and empower you. 

**BHAVISHYA SHAH**