

## The Good and Bad with Social Media – Part 2

In Part 1 of this article, I gave some startling statistics and what is positive and negative about social media. True, it is my view that social media is more positive than negative. Social media is made possible because there is a worldwide web, we call the Internet. I do not hear people criticizing the role of physical libraries in society. The internet is the library at your finger tips. That is wonderful.

We can search scholarly articles, enter university digital libraries, and just discover the world in the privacy of our homes. We can listen to radio stations from literally any country. It is also because of the Internet that we can purchase items, pay utility bills, pay school fees, book vacations, etc. The internet has made the world very small. I do not believe we can live without it anymore.

However, here is what is challenging with the Internet and social media. Since people can access the Internet in the privacy of their homes, secrecy and privacy can become a challenge to many. When these two components are combined with the lack of self-discipline and guidance, there is a higher risk of dysfunction, addictions, and social imbalance. Another challenge for some is the portability of the Internet. With a hand-held gadget (iPad, SmartPhone, etc.) and the availability of Wi-Fi and phone Data, an individual can really hide a crippling secret for a very long time--- send nude picture of yourself, sexting, etc. Many relationships end because a partner found inappropriate texts or photos on his or her partner's hand-held gadget.

Then there is even a more powerful culprit at play. In my 2017 article entitled *"Those Annoying Cell Phones Are Still in the Way,"* I stated: "There is a chemical produced in the brain called dopamine which some experts believe is the culprit. Writer, Arpan Roy, in his article, "Why are people so addicted to their cell phones/smartphones?" shares about this chemical and how it impacts us. He writes: "Dopamine, a "feel-good chemical," is a neurotransmitter in our brain, which although critical for more mental and physical functions, play an important role in reward-seeking behavior. . . Dopamine motivates you to seek pleasure-giving rewards like food, sex, and in some cases, drugs."

Have you noticed when on a social media platform like Facebook or Twitter, one can scroll down for an unlimited time, viewing the photos and information? Each time the hand swipes the gadget, more dopamine is released giving that urge to stay there and a feeling that you are doing something right and pleasurable.

What is social media addiction? In the article by Jena Hilliard entitled "What is social media addiction?" she states: "Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas." Experts say that social media addiction can be similar to any other substance abuse

addiction. There can be a pre-occupation with social media and withdrawal symptoms like unpleasant feelings when social media is restricted. Here is one revealing quote by Jene Hilliard: “Studies have shown that the constant stream of retweets, likes, and shares from these sites cause the brain’s reward area to trigger the same kind of chemical reaction seen with drugs like Cocaine. In fact, neuroscientists have compared social media interaction to a syringe of dopamine being injected straight into the system.”

Social media addiction is serious. Hilliard article continues: “According to a new study by Harvard University, self-disclosure on social networking sites lights up the same part of the brain that also ignites when taking an addictive substance. The reward area in the brain and its chemical messenger pathways affect decisions and sensations.” Now we can see why so many people cannot put their phones down. For many, a social media continual presence is like an escape from reality or the only “support system” they have. Here is the subtlety with social media. It can become an echo chamber of your thoughts and views. In other words, as you continue to view and read topics with your bias, the more they appear for you to view or read. Then you become stagnated and hooked, perhaps on something that is really a conspiracy. You are trapped, and difficult to be rescued from the dark pit of the negative side of social media conspiracies.

To conclude here are a few tips to help one deal with social media addiction taken from the article “Six Ways To Beat Social Media Addiction.” **1) Turn Off Notifications.** “It can be so difficult to detach yourself from social media when your phone lights up every minute with new notifications. So turn them off.” **2) Don’t Have Your Phone By You Whilst You Sleep.** Place the phone outside the room. “It is not difficult to see how our phones wreak havoc with our sleep schedules. 45% of people choose to scroll through social media instead of sleep.” **3) Remove Your Phone From Your Morning Routine.** Likewise, do not reach for your phone the moment you get out of bed. **4) Place Less Weight On Your Personal Social Media Appearance.** “One of the big signs of social media addiction is that you spend a lot of time overthinking and over-planning your posts. This causes anxiety and stress. If you place less importance on how and what you post, you will be able to free up your mind from this stress.” **5) Opt For Analogue Alternatives.** “Fall back in love with your hobbies or discover new ones. Set yourself time away from work and your phone to explore and enjoy non-screen-based activities, such as arts and crafts, reading or exercising.” **6) Digital Detox.** The best thing that you can do is learn to live without it. This doesn’t mean abandoning social media, it just means spending some time away from it completely. This is called a digital detox.

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