



Self-Worth – Social Media

Social Media - Introduction

Social Media is the use of websites and applications that enable users to create and share content and participate in virtual networking. When used responsibly, social media can be a fantastic tool to stay in touch with the world. The problem is that most people don't know how to manage the world of social media. The pressure of trying to look good, be interesting and appear successful can cause feelings of low self-worth, in even the most popular of social media users.

When is Social Media a serious problem?

In this technological age, social media has become the primary gateway to connect with friends and the world. Unfortunately, what often begins as harmless fun can, for some people, fast-track into a damaging, narcissism-fuelled habit which negatively impacts self-worth and the way they perceive others. Social media has also been used to bully, harass and intimidate people.

According to Dr Lars Madsen, clinical advisor to The MindShift Foundation, "Studies show that social media—such as Facebook and Instagram—allows for easy social comparisons that can result in people feeling envious and less than positive about themselves. And while social media doesn't cause people to feel bad about themselves on its own, the more an individual uses social media, the more they are confronted with instances where they are prone to comparing themselves with others."

Dr Madsen notes there are behavioural warning signs that social media is affecting your self-worth:

1. Social media disrupts your real-world thoughts and interactions.
2. Social media affects your mood.
3. Real-life interactions are difficult and being alone is uncomfortable.
4. You find yourself envious of what others are promoting.
5. You relish the misfortune of other people.
6. You measure your success by that of other people.
7. You're addicted to the attention and drama that can permeate social media.

What can you do?

If you find social media is making you feel worse about your own life, it's time to take those feelings seriously. You might not want to distance yourself entirely, especially if it's your primary means of connection with friends and family, so here are some tips to assist you in managing your mindset around your social media usage.



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1. Stop the automatic post feed. If you have social media applications installed on your phone, turn off your notifications. Hearing your phone beep whenever you get a notification might make you feel wanted, but when you're checking every notification mindlessly, it's time to consciously break the cycle. When your head is down, you're missing the real world.
2. Identify and block what negatively affects you. Are there certain people in your Facebook or Twitter newsfeed who routinely make you feel worse about yourself? Hiding specific people can help. Unlike those useless pages that offer nothing of value, and if your profile is personal, consider unfriending those that you don't actually consider a friend. Recognise the various personality types; the attention seekers, the ranters, the inspirers, the couch activists, the foodies, etc. This is your page. What do you want to see?
3. Clarify your goals. Envy and jealousy can lead to feeling stuck. Some people just seem to have it all, so if you're feeling envious, why not take the opportunity to clarify what's important to you? Do you want a BMW? A great relationship? To travel? You can feel less vulnerable when you clarify what you want and *how* you're going to get it. Working towards a personal goal can be more satisfying than watching others display theirs.
4. Stop the comparison calculation. It's easy to view ourselves in a negative light when we assess ourselves in comparison to others. Combat these feelings by reminding yourself that you mean something in this world. You matter to other people, and in some way, another person depends on you for something. You are someone's partner, child, parent, colleague and friend. That's special in its own right and no one can diminish that.
5. Choose live action. Have coffee with somebody, go for a walk, take some nature photos, or seek out the laughter of someone who makes you smile. Even a phone call provides better interaction than social media. Real life is a comfort. What's on a screen is just data on a computer.
6. Help others. You can get a great mood boost from helping someone. The emotional satisfaction of doing something useful for another person can lift you out of a negative mindset, and while it might sound like a cliché, it can also remind you of what you have to be grateful for.

Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you. Our online resource page also has a full list of organisations where you can get further information. <http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/>.



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Things to remember

Social media can be used for positive activities, like connecting with friends and family, helping students with school work and for entertainment, but it can also be used to hurt people. The negative effects of social media use can lead to low self-worth with potentially devastating consequences.

In summary

Adopt healthy practices for your use of social media and protect yourself from negative feelings. Take a separation from social media or modify your online settings to reduce notifications. Consider changing your habits and read posts that educate and advocate. After all, your true friends will always be willing to 'share' and 'like' your life's experiences over a coffee any day of the week.

Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit www.mindshift.org.au.

Our Mission

It is our mission to ensure that every person has access to the resources available to build healthy self-worth, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

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