Healthy social media use
Getting the most out of social media for your psychological wellbeing

An introduction - why do we use social media?

"I want to stay in touch with what friends are doing"

"I want to share what I'm up to with others"

"It's good for helping me stay up to date with news and current events"

"I want my voice to be heard"

"I use it when I'm bored"

"It's filled with funny and entertaining content"

"My friends all have it"

Social media use has boomed since the turn of the millennia as a new, exciting, superfast way to stay connected to one another and the world. Never before in human history have we had access to platforms that can place us in front of an audience of so many from around the globe. However, with increasing evidence suggesting that social media use is associated with unhappiness and dissatisfaction, and that it may be negatively affecting our wellbeing, how can we ensure we're using social media in a healthy way?

In this booklet, we will explore how you can take charge of your social media use. We'll explore what to look out for, the psychological mechanisms that can underpin the common difficulties experienced online through social media, and how we can protect ourselves and use social media in a positive, healthy way.

Ponder upon this question again for a moment and consider, why do you use social media, really?

Social connection

Social media has received some bad press in recent years. Scientific research has found associations between social media use and worsening mood, poorer sense of wellbeing, lower self-esteem, greater body dissatisfaction, and depressive symptoms. However, this is not to say that social media is necessarily the cause of all these difficulties, only that it is somehow associated with them. It could mean that people who are already predisposed to struggle with these factors, are perhaps drawn to greater social media use. Furthermore, there is a plethora of research that suggests that when using social media in a certain way, it can actually provide us with some protective factors for our psychological wellbeing. The first of which is arguably the main reason we use social media in the first place, for social connection.

Positive, active social engagement

Several researchers have found that when people use social media to actively, positively engage and interact with one another, it can increase their subjective wellbeing and reduce stress. The key point here is that this is applicable to 'positive, active use'. This means that in order to receive benefit from social media use, you'll need to ensure that for the most part you are using it to comment on others posts, post your own content and interact with the comments, like content, message people, and all other forms of active engagement in a way that is kind, supportive and friendly.

TIP 1: Social media can have positive effects on our psychological wellbeing when we are actively engaging and interacting with other people in a positive, supportive and friendly way.

Managing 'trolls'

Of course, there are many times when people use social media to interact with others, but not positively. 'Online disinhibition' is a term which describes the phenomena whereby people are far more likely to express opinions and share views online, which they would not do were they face-to-face with others. When people are protected behind a screen or keyboard, the anonymity and distance that it can provide means people are far more inclined to write hurtful comments that they would not say to someone in 'real' life.

This form of engagement is devastating for users and it is important that you protect yourself from it at all costs. It may be tempting to react and respond

"When people are protected behind a screen or keyboard, the anonymity and distance that it can provide means people are far more inclined to write hurtful comments …"

but be mindful about looking after yourself if you choose to do so. You could try responding respectfully or factually but try not to be baited by the comments. Sometimes it's more important to preserve your psychological energy and wellbeing and respond to the positive comments instead.

Many social media platforms have introduced ways to block, unfriend, and unfollow certain people and report hateful content, including ways this can be done without the user finding out. Make use of these functions where possible and know that you should never have to put up with hurtful comments online. Seek support from a loved and trusted other, or a professional, if you feel that the hurtful comments you are receiving online are affecting your psychological wellbeing.

TIP 2: It is always completely unacceptable to be abusive to others online. If you receive hurtful comments, make use of the platform's functions such as reporting content and blocking and unfriending users, to ensure you protect your mental health.
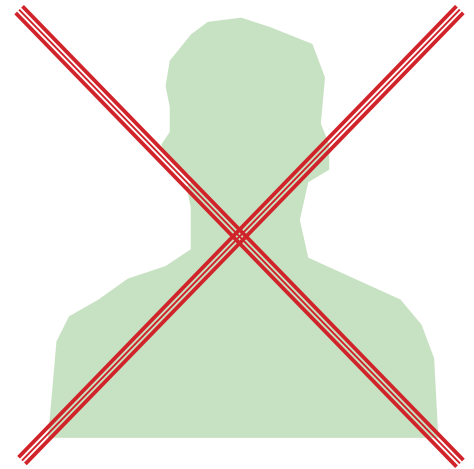
Unblock, unfriend and unfollow certain people and report hateful content

Loneliness

Although connecting socially with others online is important, be aware that seeking forms of social connection should not be an activity solely, or even mostly, achieved through social media. Social media can certainly build on existing face-to-face relationships and can improve people's social support systems which in turn is positive for mental wellbeing. However, when people replace face-to-face relationships with connections established online, research has found that the quality of social support both given and received is sacrificed. What makes the difference here, is that social media can benefit your wellbeing as long as you're using it to build on the social relationships you already have offline, and not to substitute offline interactions or to solely attempt to address feelings of loneliness.

TIP 3: Ensure you are using social media to compliment, not substitute, your offline, 'real world' relationships and ways of connecting with others.

If social media is your primary method of connecting with others, consider whether and why you might be struggling to form meaningful social connections with others offline. There can be several reasons for this, but you need not feel as though the only way you can socialise or express your feelings and needs to other people is through a screen. If the thought of socialising, meeting in person, talking on the phone, or other more direct

forms of socialisation make you feel worried or scared, or if you do not think there are others there for you to talk to, it might be a good idea to reach out to a therapist who can help you.

Social media alone is not adequate to address feelings of loneliness and social isolation

TIP 4: Social media is not adequate in addressing feelings of social isolation and loneliness. If you're struggling with loneliness, know that there are people who can help. Get in touch with relevant helplines or a professional if you feel unable to reach out to anyone you know.

Self-esteem, body image and social media

Psychological researcher, Erin Vogel, and her team found that although social media users were aware that other users were selectively presenting the best versions of themselves, they were still negatively affected by it. Selective posting, filters, angles and lighting, are just a few ways that users present idealistic versions of themselves to their followers, so it is perhaps unsurprising that several studies have found similar connections between low self-esteem, reduced wellbeing and social media use.

Let's take body image first. Several research papers have found an association between lower body satisfaction and higher engagement with photo-based social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. Although this does not mean that these social media platforms are the cause of body dissatisfaction, it does identify a relationship between the two. However, there are ways you can protect yourself from feeling dissatisfied with your image while using social media.

A research study in the UK, found that a group of young women who engaged with images related to either, #fitspo, quotes of self-compassion, or both, reported feeling differently about their bodies depending on which they engaged with. The women who scored lower on ratings of self-compassion were those who viewed only #fitspo, whereas those who viewed either just self-compassionate images or a mix of both, were kinder to themselves and reported feeling more positive about their bodies. Similar results were obtained for men, with those who looked at male #fitspo accounts more likely to compare their own appearance to others for better or for worse. It is therefore important to consider which social media accounts you follow and engage with.

- Does the social media content you engage with leave you picking at your so-called flaws, wishing you looked different, disliking your body?
- Are you left with an over-focused, even obsessional view of bodies that makes you forget or surpass the importance of other qualities?

If the answer to these questions is a maybe or a yes, curate your feed. You have the power to follow and engage with different users, accounts and content. If you leave a certain post or account feeling negative about yourself, unfollow, mute or disengage. If you are only seeing one type of content (e.g. body positivity accounts alone) consider diversifying your feed.

Try and follow other accounts that interest you, make you laugh, smile, feel curious, and ones that leave you feeling inspired.

There is an association between lower body satisfaction and higher engagement with photo-based social media platforms

Protect your self-esteem and wellbeing

Although we've spoken about the importance of using social media as a tool for social engagement, be wary of seeking your validation through social media alone. Positive comments, likes, and other forms of feedback on social media can leave us feeling seen, approved of, and as though we belong. These are hugely important to us as human beings require a sense of belonging for psychological wellbeing. However, if you find yourself judging your feelings of worth based upon the amount of likes you receive, or you judge your posts on the amount of engagement they receive from other users, then this may mean you are vulnerable to experiencing the negative effects of social media use.

Researchers have found evidence that having a greater sense of purpose in life limits the impact that social media 'likes' can have on your self-esteem. Accordingly, ensuring that you enrich your life with other activities that are important to you and which provide you a sense of purpose, can help protect your self-esteem while online.

Find your values

Of course, how to improve self-esteem and find a valued, purposeful direction in life are age-old challenges that are difficult to address, however there are a few different ways you can begin to consider this.

Firstly, think about what kind of person you wish to be. How would you like others to describe you? What is important to you? Perhaps it is that you are kind, compassionate, funny, ambitious or considerate. These are your values. Consider how you can live your life according to these values in life's different domains, such as among family, friends, leisure, your own time, and work.

"Ensuring that you enrich your life with other activities that are important to you and which provide you a sense of purpose, can help protect your self-esteem while online."

Take a look at the examples below and give it a go yourself.

Family
It is important to me that my family feel loved, cared for and supported by me. I want to be present and available for my children, and helpful and loving to my wife. I want us to be united, to have fun together, explore, travel, and get outside! My family are my priority.
Family related values = loving, caring, supportive, present, available, helpful, fun

Leisure
It is important to me that I maintain my friendships. I want to spend quality time with my friends, give them my attention, have a laugh, be spontaneous, and share my ups and my downs.
Leisure related values = attentive, funny, spontaneous, open and transparent

Work
I want to keep achieving at work, growing my business and solving problems. I want to feel stable in my employment, have positive employee relations, be motivated myself and motivate others.
Work related values = ambitious, engaged, stable, social, motivated and motivating

Write down what is important to you within each of these domains and many more, to inform you of your values. Keep it genuine, open and honest. Who do you really want to be? Once you have these values in mind, use them to guide you. They serve as your compass for the rest of your life, pointing you in the direction of what really matters.

Consider next how social media fits into these values. Perhaps it's through ensuring you are compassionate and considerate online. Perhaps it's reducing your screen time to remain ambitious and motivated at work or present with your family. When we find what is important to us, what values we wish to live by, we can focus on doing just that and know that this is what is important.

TIP 6: If you notice that your source of self-esteem is from social media, consider re-evaluating what really matters to you. Find your sense of purpose and values and be guided by these to keep your focus fixed upon what matters.

Don't worry if you find this exercise challenging. These are difficult questions to answer. Try talking about it with a trusted loved one, or a professional who can help you if you are really struggling.

Fake news, polarisation and social media as a tool for learning

Another reason people use social media is to gain and learn new information. However, in a time where it is challenging to distinguish between what is 'fake news' and what is trustworthy, social media has come under fire for being a platform that has contributed to the spreading of disinformation, harmful content, and even for polarising opinions and meddling in our political views that extends outwards to negatively impact our offline relationships and play on our emotions. However, with more and more of us turning to social media to learn about current affairs and other things, how can we ensure that what we are reading is reliable and trustworthy and protect our psychological wellbeing?

What is an algorithm?

It is important to understand the functions of algorithms on social media platforms. An algorithm is a set of mathematical rules which specify how data will behave. Social media algorithms are designed to tailor information according to the user's data, their current preferences, friends, followers and content of engagement. It tailors feeds, maintains order, and ranks search results, advertisements, and what is displayed. This can mean that the more you engage with certain content, the more that content will be sent your way. This is not necessarily a bad thing. We all want to see information that we find interesting after all. However, when it comes to the dissemination of fake news, certain political ideologies, and other potentially socially divisive information, it can leave users viewing a feed that only consists of one type of content, from one ideology or set of opinions, without providing balanced views, perspectives, or verified information. The more users engage with it, the more is sent their way. Additionally, further psychological processes are involved and, as a result, we can get stuck in a cycle that interferes with our belief system. Let's take a closer look at this.

Watch out for cognitive and emotional manipulation!

Do you find yourself particularly drawn to certain pages, accounts, or people? Ever noticed what was going on for you emotionally when you read an article with a 'clickbait' title? Viral marketing research has found that

> "The more you engage with certain content, the more that content will be sent your way."

people engage the most with content that either makes them angry, fearful or that arouses awe. Unfortunately, this means that some content creators deliberately attempt to exploit and arouse your emotions to increase engagement with their content. Not such a bad thing when it is awe inspiring, but unfortunately it often is not. This may explain why content that is particularly shocking, distressing or worrying frequents our social media so often. Couple this with some social media algorithms and this can lead to more and more distressing content being sent your way after you begin engaging with it.

Psychologically, many humans have what is known as a 'negativity bias'. This causes us to pay more attention and be more impacted by negative information, than positive information. It is not funny cat videos that keep people awake at night, after all! Our tendency to be drawn to negative information may impact on our social media engagement and subsequently, our mental health. This is exacerbated when we are already feeling anxious, low or irritable. The lower your mood is to start with, the more you will be drawn to content that arouses emotions of fear and anger, and the greater the chance of you experiencing an increase in negative affect that stays with you for longer and permits you to engage with further content leaving you entangled in a vicious cycle (*see Figure 1*) that drags your mood down and likely incites fear too.
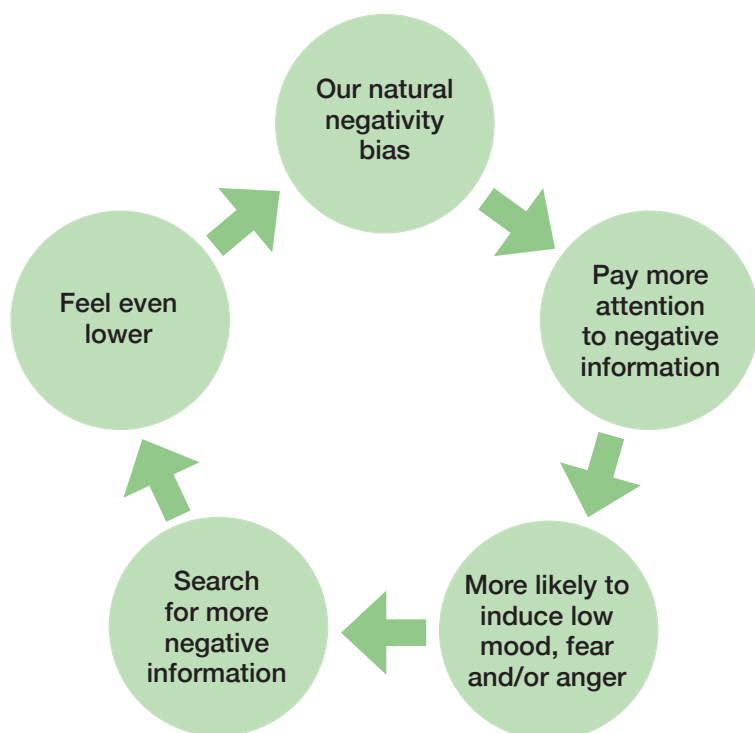

Figure 1 The vicious cycle we can become stuck in

Sadly, there are many examples where groups have exploited this cycle, disregarding factual knowledge in favour of content that arouses fear or anger. For example, when the Program of Extremism at George Washington University analysed ideologically extreme groups, they found that a key recruiting tool for an American White Nationalist group was to spread the idea that white people are at risk of racial violence at the hands of other groups, inferring fear into its followers, before providing extremist solutions to reduce this inferred anxiety for followers. It is crucial you are aware of potential emotional manipulation tactics used on social media so that you can protect yourself.

TIP 7: Be mindful of the digital manipulation tactics of content creators and the widespread issue of fake news on social media before deciding whether you wish to engage with certain content or not.

It is also important that you are aware of the extent to which fake news can circulate on social media, and that if certain content is eliciting a strong emotional response within you, to approach it with extra caution.

Online content that paints the world as dangerous, or as certain groups to be feared and out of control, can manipulate human emotion and natural psychological biases that mean people are more likely to align with polarising, and even extremist, ideologies. It is therefore worth bearing this in mind when you are engaging with social media.

If you find yourself becoming angry, fearful, or frustrated frequently at the content you are engaging with then it is worth reminding yourself that it is likely you are not seeing the full picture of reality, information is largely unvetted and therefore can be false no matter how professional or credible it seems, and you may wish to consider how you can protect yourself from being weighed down by this content.

Social media users often engage with information online that adheres to their current belief system, known as the confirmation bias. Some of the effects of our confirmation bias, is that we are not only more drawn to information that confirms our beliefs, but that also means we are more likely to ignore information to the contrary. This means that when we are repeatedly exposed to only one type of information online, this likely strengthens our beliefs. We are more attracted to information that confirms this belief and more likely to ignore alternative views. Not only does this mean our social media feeds can become 'echo chambers', presenting only one set of views, but it may also serve to enhance political polarisation, which is likely to be established through online communities.

"If you find yourself becoming angry, fearful, or frustrated frequently at the content you are engaging with then it is worth reminding yourself that it is likely you are not seeing the full picture of reality..."

Figure 2 How online content can manipulate us and cause us to change our belief system
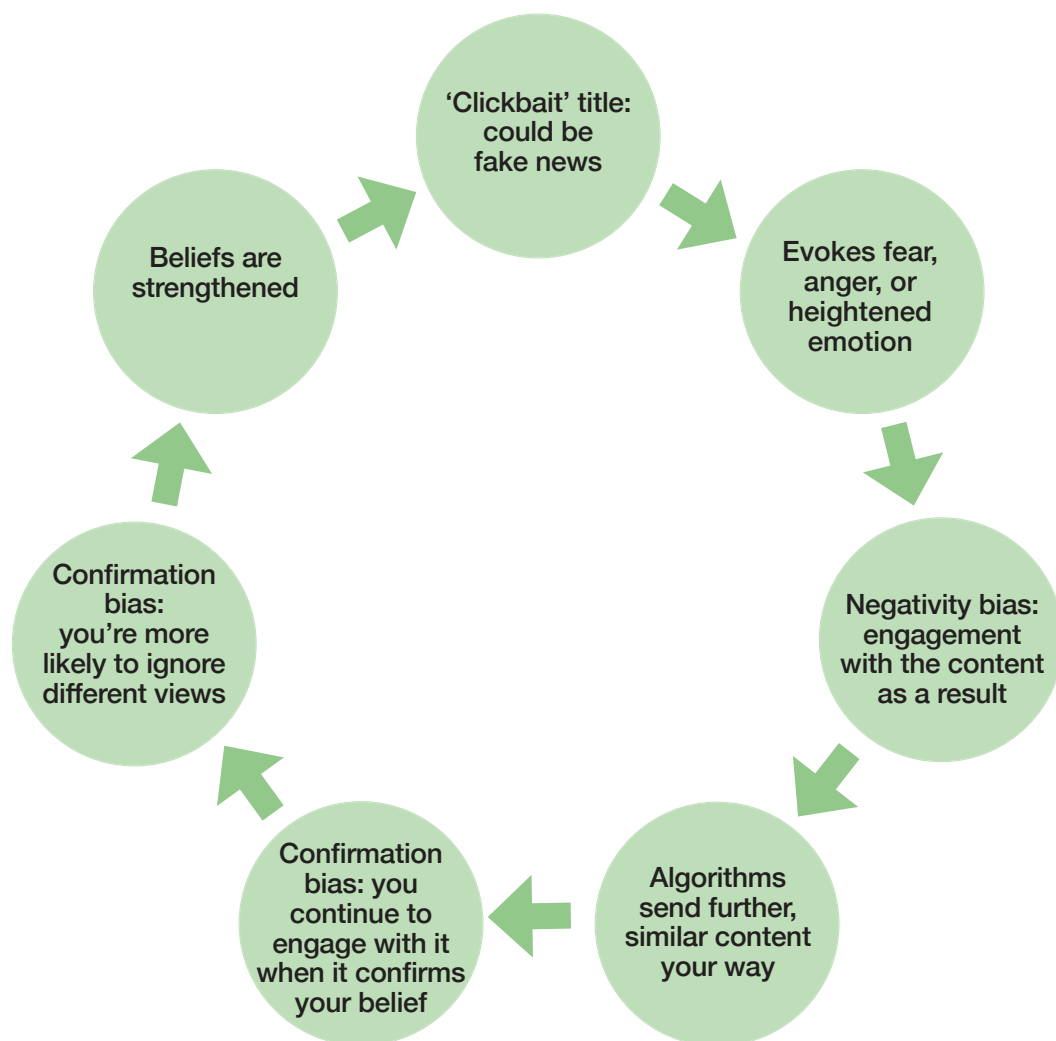
How do you prevent yourself from being weighed down by this content?

- Acknowledge your feelings while you are on social media. If your use is eliciting a strong negative response within you, take that as a sign to step back.
- Remind yourself that there is always another side to a story. If you cannot think about how people with alternative views may approach this, then that may be a sign that you are not receiving enough diverse content.

- Actively diversify your feed. Follow a range of people, accounts, and groups that represent the full scope of your interests.

TIP 8: Only seeing one set of opinions or one type of content on your social media? Consider diversifying your feed. Follow and engage with a variety of different content that represents the full spectrum of your interests.

Protect your 'real' world social relationships

Researchers have found that the more individuals engage with content that polarises opinions, the greater the strain in their real-life relationships. Psychologist Gregory Trevors and his colleagues, called this phenomenon 'the backfire effect'. It explains some aspects of polarisation that extends from social media into our 'real' world relationships. The backfire effect happens when people experience information or opinions that contradict their tightly held views and opinions. Information is not received in a way that allows for emotional distancing and the involvement of the part of the brain responsible for logical, rational thought and reasoning, called the prefrontal cortex. Therefore, what appears to happen is that people cling on even tighter to those beliefs and often exhibit a negative, angry reaction to those who believe differently.

Beliefs can become tightly held through misuse of social media platforms, over engagement with certain content, clickbait titles, and content designed to evoke an emotional response, along with algorithms that hinder the chances of viewing a different set of opinions. Social relationships are integral to our psychological wellbeing and ought to be valued above our online relationships and connections. If you are finding yourself angry, frustrated and confused as to why others in your life do not have the same beliefs as you, consider the above points and how your social media use may be affecting your world view.

Anger is not necessarily a bad emotion, but if you feel as though your views are inhibiting your offline social relationships and ability to maintain an open mind, it may be worth considering distancing yourself from social media to ensure this is not unnecessarily and unhelpfully, causing you distress or impacting on your social relationships.

TIP 9: If certain social media content is evoking a strong negative emotion within you, treat this as a sign that you need to pause. Stop. Breathe. Remind yourself that some content is designed to play on our natural psychological biases and emotions when considering whether you wish to continue engaging with its content or switch it off.

How is social media content affecting your mood?

Follow the below steps before you consider engaging with content on social media:

1. Stop. Breathe.	Slow down your process at the very first moment you recognise an urge to engage with or share content.
2. Check your emotions	Do you have a strong emotional reaction to a news story? Take this as a sign that this requires you to check the information before sharing it. Remember, this might be a clickbait title, or a non-credible source that has designed the information to evoke your emotions.
3. Check the source	How do you know this is credible? Only engage with material from credible sources. For example, for medical information seek information from the NHS and the WHO as these are examples of credible sources.

Address your screen time

You have probably seen and heard the idea that people are spending far too long glued to their screens. Perhaps you yourself struggle to sit through a TV show without scrolling on your phone, or make it through a dinner with friends, without checking your social media. Indeed, social media can distract us from the very relationships that are important to us and can lead us to feel less satisfied with our face-to-face social interactions.

One group of psychologists found that even minor engagement with phones during a group social dinner led to group members finding the experience less enjoyable than those who placed their phones on silent and put them away, so they were free to engage socially with those before them. However, it can be challenging to withhold engagement with social media, especially when it's so accessible on our smart phones. Why are we so drawn to passive scrolling and continued checking throughout the day?

Digital manipulation and brain hacks

One answer lies in the design of social media platforms, especially when accessed via our smart phones. There are a few tricks, or so called 'brain hacks' built into social media systems that deliberately attempt to engage us, and keep us engaged, with their platform and content.

Take the feed pages on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as an example. Ever wondered why you just can't help but keep scrolling? You are being bombarded with a constant reel of new, exciting, unpredictably engaging information that triggers your reward system.

The expectation that scrolling on your feed will provide an unpredictable reel of potentially engaging information instantly triggers the expectation component of your reward system. When this happens, dopamine (the feel good hormone) is released, encouraging us to keep scrolling in the hope of a further activation of dopamine when our scrolling is 'rewarded', which happens when we engage with content instantly, without a delay to our gratification.

Psychologist Susan Weinschenk describes how we get stuck in this 'dopamine-induced loop' which keeps us seeking and wanting more, ultimately engaging more with our social media. Unfortunately, this serves as one of the reasons why some people are finding that their social media use is becoming problematic. It feels good for us to passively scroll and difficult to put the phone down.

> "We get stuck in a 'dopamine-induced loop' which keeps us seeking and wanting more..."

Another example of brain hacking is through the use of notifications. Have you noticed that you receive notifications for several things throughout the day from your different social media channels?

Dr Khan and Soren Kenner describe how initially notifications were developed to simply notify you. However, when it became apparent that they also increased user engagement with the platform, the notification wars began. That small red dot at the corner of the screen acts like a red cloth in front of a bull, triggering a small amount of dopamine as you hope for a reward by engaging with it. Once you do engage with it, you're on and you're hooked!

One study conducted by American researchers Adrian Ward and his team, found that the mere presence of a smartphone reduced available cognitive capacity, even when people are successful at refraining from the temptation of checking their phones. The simple fact they know it's in their peripheral, appeared to take up some of their cognitive capacity which can impact their ability to remain focused and attentive to the task at hand. We appear to be easily distracted and attached to our phones and our feeds.

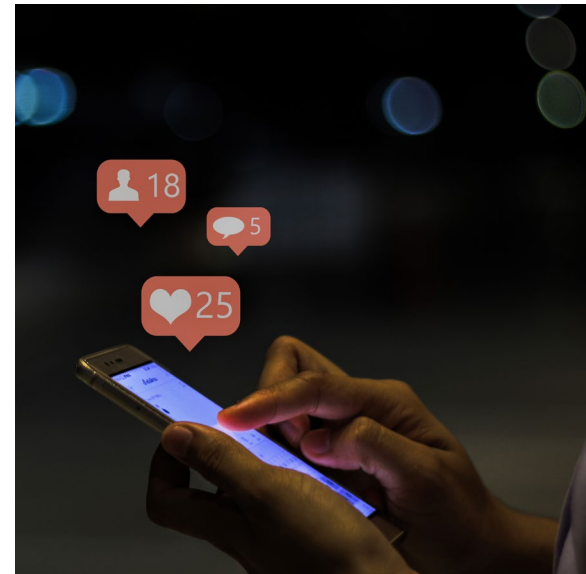**The mere presence of a smart phone reduces our available cognitive capacity**

Problematic social media use

You may have heard of the phrase, 'social media addiction,' but be aware that this is not actually a recognised diagnostic. Rather, problematic social media use is the term used to describe social media use that interferes with people's lives in an unhealthy way, and it is believed that these brain hacks play a significant part in our potential obsession, reliance, and interest in social media.

Unsure as to whether your social media use counts as healthy or problematic? Consider the following questions:

- Do you find that your phone use interferes with your 'real' life tasks and relationships?
- Do you find that your mood changes before, during and after social media use?
- Does social media, and/or checking your phone and notifications, dominate your thoughts?
- Do you experience discomfort, low mood or anxiety at the prospect of not having access to your social media for an unspecified amount of time?

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, this may indicate problematic social media use that has been associated with low mood,

anxiety, low self-esteem, loss of focus and attention and hindered 'real life' social relationships. It is important to consider what costs and benefits you might receive from taking greater charge of your social media use. This does not mean you never need to use it. As we will continue to discuss, social media can be a fantastic resource for us. However, only when it is used in certain ways. If you think you would like to cut down on your social media use, avoid digital manipulation strategies, and better manage your screen time, keep reading.

Taking charge of your social media use

If you wish to reduce your reliance and time spent on social media, you're probably wondering how best to do so to ensure you are using it in a healthy way. Thankfully, there are several ways in which we can protect ourselves from the digital manipulation of social media companies.

Are you hoping to reduce your social media use through willpower alone? Unfortunately, this is likely to fail according to a research report by scientists Damien Brevers and Ofir Turel. Their research found that those who tried to limit their social media use, or gain greater control of it, through willpower alone were largely unsuccessful. It was those who engaged in 'proactive strategies', that had the greatest success. Proactive strategies shown to help reduce screen time and social media reliance are shown in *table 1* overleaf.

> **TIP 10:** Use proactive strategies to reduce time spent on social media if you think this may be a problem, such as placing your phone in another room, buying an alarm clock, or deleting the social media apps from your phone.

There are no government guidelines or suggested hours to spend on social media per day. Your usage and rate of usage only becomes problematic when you, or perhaps others close to you, begin to recognise that you are spending more time on social media at the expense of other important elements of your life. When you think your social media use is interfering in your life in a way that is affecting what, or who, is most important to you, that may be when you need to consider utilising proactive strategies to reduce your time on social media. You don't need to employ them all, maybe choose one or two that you would find the easiest first and set short, manageable time limits. Once you begin to get used to it, you can prolong the time you keep your phone off or begin to introduce strategies that you would have initially found more challenging.

"Those who tried to limit their social media use, or gain control of it, through willpower alone were largely unsuccessful."

Table 1 Proactive strategies to help reduce screen time and social media reliance

Delete the social media apps off your phone	You could also try changing your notification settings, to avoid receiving an influx of notifications, reducing the need to check your feed.
Leave your phone in another room	This can be especially helpful when you need to focus on the task or situation in hand, such as when you are working, studying or socialising.
Monitor your screen time	Most smart phones and apps allow you to track the time spent on social media, so you can ensure you're not spending longer than you intend to on social media.
Charge your devices in another room, especially at night	Is your phone the first thing you check in the morning and the last thing you check at night? Break the habit by not charging it next to your bed. It is especially problematic to have our phones at our bedside when we are trying to sleep, as screens interfere with our circadian rhythm, meaning we may lose sleep hours and good quality sleep. It is recommended that you do not look at any screens at least two hours before you plan on sleeping.
Buy an alarm clock	How many of us rely on our phones as our alarms? It's not needed and may lead to temptation to check your feed in the morning and at night.
Spend time somewhere with limited Wi-Fi	Go for a walk in the hills, a coastal trip perhaps, or a remote getaway and return feeling refreshed and reminded that you don't need to spend ages on social media.
Put your phone in a difficult to grab compartment	This might just put you off checking it routinely. Certainly, try and avoid having your phone next to your laptop when working, or on the dinner table when socialising.
Put your phone on mute, aeroplane mode or switch it off.	Especially important when you need to focus, or even just try turning it off for a couple hours a day to ease you out of habitual usage.

Although proactive strategies had the greatest success in Brevers and Turel's research, they suggested that they can be used in conjunction with cognitive strategies too. Cognitive refers to the ways we think and, in this context, a cognitive strategy would mean setting your own time limits on social media usage. For example, set yourself the challenge of not checking your social media at the dinner table, aided by a proactive strategy of placing your phone on the other side of the room at dinner time.

Try a proactive strategy and note how many times you think about social media or feel the urge to get your phone out

TIP 11: Don't know whether your social media usage is healthy or not? Try a proactive strategy for a day and notice how many times you think about your social media, feel the urge to get your phone, or how long you can last without it. If you struggle with these tasks, this may indicate that you are using social media in a habitual or even potentially problematic way and it may be time to make some proactive changes for good!

If, even after employing proactive strategies, you still feel compelled to use social media in a way that you view as disruptive, this may indicate that further help is needed. Reach out to a trusted loved one or mental health professional for help and support.

Key points

Although social media serves to benefit us in many ways, it is important to be aware of its more harmful aspects also. We can ensure social media is working for us and not negatively impacting our psychological wellbeing in the following ways.

1. Actively engage with other users on social media in a positive, supportive and friendly way.
2. Follow accounts and engage with content that inspires you, brings you joy, makes you feel good, makes you laugh, smile, makes you curious, and keeps you interested.
3. Diversify your feed! Engage with content that reflects a range of views and opinions and that reflects the full spectrum of your interests.
4. Use the social platforms' functions to block, report, unfriend or unfollow users and content that is abusive and cruel. You have the power!
5. Unfollow, hide, disengage with any content that leaves you feeling worse, negative, or less than. You have the power here too!
6. Ensure you are using social media to compliment, not substitute, your offline social connections. If you are struggling with this or use social media as a way to address loneliness, get in touch with helplines, professionals, or reach out to someone you know and trust.
7. If certain social media content is evoking a strong reaction within you, pause. Stop. Breathe. Remind yourself that content is designed to play on our emotions and cognitive biases before you decide whether to continue to engage.
8. Use proactive strategies to reduce time spent on social media, so more time can be spent focusing on what is really important in your life. Start by switching your phone off for a couple hours a day or buy an alarm clock.
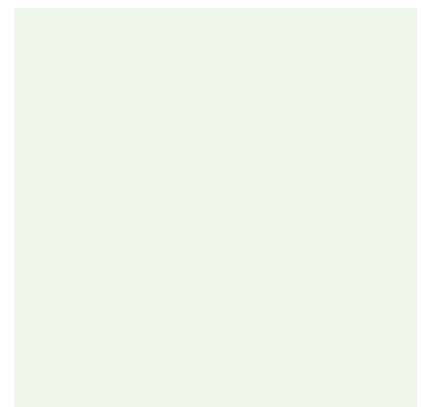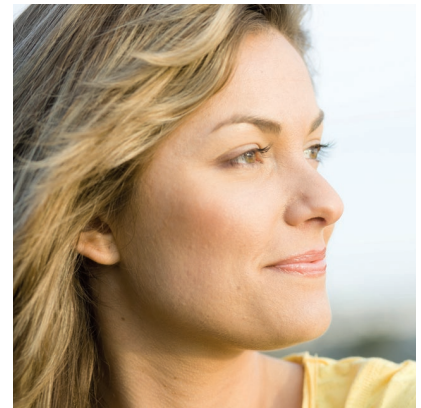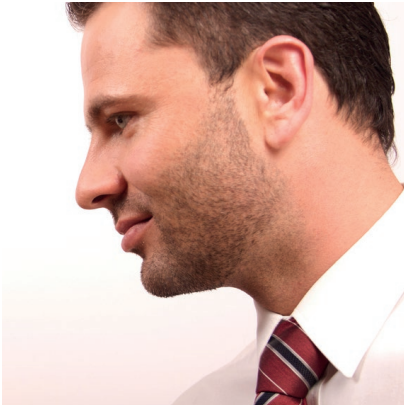
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