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Background

While social media can offer many benefits to society, and to young people more specifically, it can be argued that it has also transformed our culture into one of over-sharing. Research is showing that as well as providing young people with a voice and a platform to share information it is also beginning to affect their mental health.

Social media is making us restless, a study from Glasgow University has shown that two-thirds of young people from the survey admitted to having difficulty relaxing when unable to use their social media accounts. We should ask the question, what impact does this have on our mental health?

2

Why it matters

Social media is addictive: Ofcom statistics show that for an audience of 12-15 year olds, Snapchat is the most intensively used social app (24%) of the audience saying they use it more than 10 times a day. Facebook still feature very highly, with 50% of the audience saying they use it two or more times a day, and Instagram and WhatsApp being boredom relief. "Likes" and comments are positive reinforcement for posting the third and fifth most used apps respectively. People use the sites for myriad reasons; however, it usually serves, on some level, the same basic purposes: distraction information, making it difficult for a person to stop.

3

Information

Social media makes us compare our lives with others': Posts on social media many times present an idealized version of what's happening, what something looks like, or how things are going. This can lead users to constantly compare themselves to others and think less of their own lives. If things are going particularly well for people in your newsfeed and you're having a rough day, of course this will likely negatively affect your mood.

4

Low self-esteem is not the only result of the high level of social media use. Here are some signs to look out for: Low self-esteem, Feeling low when you see other people's images, Envy of others people lives - wishing your life was like someone else's. Finding social media as your first / only choice of activity done for enjoyment. Not having as many face to face conversations with your relatives and friends and feeling disconnected.

5

Social media often leads to multitasking: How many tabs do you have open right now? How are you even concentrating on one thing? Research has shown that our brains don't have the capacity to fully focus our attention on two things at once, and instead multitasking causes our brain to quickly switch from one task to another. This hinders information processing & productivity. Research has found that mental health of children and young people are 'at risk in digital age,' overall social media use, specifically night-time use, was related to poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety and depression.

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What to do

If you think someone needs assistance with their mental health being affected by social media then you could contact your local counselling services or SPA for over 18's. Ditch the Label is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-bullying charities, which provides innovative support (emotional, psychological and physical) to those who have been affected by bullying through digital and non-digital environment. 01273 01129

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Questions to consider

Social media makes us compare our lives with others': Posts on social media may present an idealized version of what's happening, what something looks like. This can lead users to constantly compare themselves to others and think less of their own lives. If things are going well for people in your newsfeed and you're having a rough day, of course this will likely negatively affect your mood. ...

