

The Social Impasse: How Social Media is Socially Destroying Us

Don't skip this, even if you think you already know everything about social media and you've already watched *The Social Dilemma* on Netflix (if you haven't, you should).

About two months ago, I got asked to do a presentation on social media and primarily how it affects teens and pre-teens. I've done hundreds of presentations on a variety of topics across the United States that have partially included issues exacerbated by social media, but never presented one that has been solely dedicated to it.

A lot of what I found I already knew such as the fact that we all spend too much time on phones and tablets, especially kids. Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 and its many variants have only made it worse.

Here are just a few stats that were collected from various studies and blended for a look at trends and how we are headed in the wrong direction if we care anything about the mental state of ourselves and our children:

- In 2015, around 22% of kids ages 8-12 had their own smartphone. By 2019, that number was estimated at 40-44%.
- The average 8-12 year-old spent around four hours and 39 minutes looking at screens each day in 2019.
- The average 13-18 year-old used them for an average of seven hours and 27 minutes each day in 2019.
- Only about half of parents with kids aged 5-15 use parental controls.
- Approximately 65-75% of children say they have cyberbullied someone online.
- One in four children have seen drugs for sale on either FB, Instagram, or Snapchat.
- Well over half have witnessed drug use, regardless of the platform. And way more than that if you include vaping (yes, nicotine is a drug).

All the while, teen rates of depression, anxiety, stress, self-harm and suicide continue to climb with the only major variable added over the last ten years being social media. The stand that we have to take starts in the home. I know how easy it is to give a kid a tablet and send them off to their room. I'm as guilty as the next guy. But the bottom line is... we aren't doing them any favors.

In order for you to gauge if your phone use is a problem, understand that if you don't control your phone but rather the phone controls you, that is a form of addiction. *The Social Dilemma* was correct when it asserted that tech companies use a form of addiction-based psychology to keep you on their platforms. They are fighting for your eyes and your time. And you know the reason why... it's the same reason that nicotine companies want to get you addicted to vaping or the cartels want to get you addicted to one of their drugs. Money. And in the case of social

media, it's advertising dollars. The more you scroll, the more money they make... same as a casino and not designed by accident.

Because the almighty dollar is and likely always will be the motivation behind invention, this social business model is unlikely to waver. But there is always a cost. The cost here is YOU and your mental health. Ask yourself this... if you knew that there was something that at some point might cause you or a loved one into depression or anxiety or even self-harm, would you allow them to continue?

Social media is a part of our lives now and by no means and I advocating for elimination. It wouldn't do any good if I was. But there are some things I encourage you to do either for yourself or your children: Limit screen time. Use parental controls. Do not sleep and do not let your kids sleep with the phone beside their bed. Turn OFF notifications (this is a BIG one). If you are an adult, ask teens for permission before you post a pic of them (they will respect you for it). Give your children your full attention when they need you instead of interrupted by your phone. And lastly, encourage their worth as a person... not their appearance or their popularity. After all, who you are as a person is heck of a lot more important than the number of followers you have.

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