

SOCIAL MEDIA

EFFECTS ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Have you ever caught yourself endlessly scrolling your social media accounts or felt bad about yourself after reading other peoples' posts? **You're not alone.**

IT'S IN THE DESIGN

Social media mimics some features found in the gambling industry designed to be immersive that keep you coming back for more, causing addiction in extreme cases. These include the following 3 elements:

1

INTERMITTENT REINFORCEMENT



This works to keep our interest and engagement up in whatever app we're using. We see posts at random, unpredictable times to keep scrolling.

2

RANDOMNESS

This is achieved through the use of algorithms (ways of distributing content.) Random content is generated and set up in a personalized way based on our interests.

When we refresh a page, we feel a sense of control, however, the algorithm is responsible for what we see. We never know what posts will pop up next, keeping us engaged longer.

3

HAVING NO SET END POINTS

Having no set end point is a common feature in gambling and social media due to the endless amount of content available, unlike certain video games or projects.

This makes it hard to walk away as we can keep scrolling forever.

Checking in with friends and family, learning new information and gaining different perspectives from around the world are some benefits of social media, but it always comes with inherent risks.

COMMON EFFECTS OF FREQUENT SOCIAL MEDIA USE

DEPRESSION

Increased time spent on social media may contribute to isolation and a lack of meaningful socialization with others. Isolation and a lack of connection can lead to depression and could be escalated by excess social media use.

More time online = less time for things that bring us joy.

ANXIETY

Anxiety may occur when using social media as a means to feel validated online through likes, comments, and follower counts.

We may also experience anxiety from the urge to “keep up” with any posts we may be missing.

FOMO

Social media is a highlight reel and we may feel excluded when we see others’ exciting moments online.

We may experience a fear of missing out (FOMO) if we feel out of the loop on current posts, increasing the amount of time checking in on apps.

SELF-ESTEEM

We see a lot of unrealistic standards online, from influencers, celebrities, and filters.

Comparing ourselves to others could lead to a negative self-worth and a damaged body image.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS TO KEEP THE EXPERIENCE POSITIVE

- Remember: It’s a highlight reel. It’s not reality. Don’t compare yourself to what you see online. Self-worth is not determined by likes, shares, comments, and follower counts
- Use social media in a meaningful way. The primary use should be to connect with others and build healthy relationships
- Be kind online and don’t spread negative content
- Block/unfollow accounts that make you feel bad
- Check in with how you feel when using social media
- Understand *why* you’re using social media... Are you bored? Looking for something specific? Is it a habit?
- Check your screen time reports - You’d be surprised how quick it adds up!