

## FOMO

### Nothing to See Here

Fear of missing out is a phenomenon that occurs when you feel pressure to be doing what everyone else is doing, attend every event, and share every life experience. It's a form of peer pressure where a person is compelled to document everything that happens to them, but it can evoke anxiety and cause social media users to question why everyone is "having fun without them." It is also connected to feelings of being unsatisfied because it constantly forces you to compare what's going on in your life to what you see on your newsfeed.

## TIPS FOR BREAKING AWAY

### Implement Rules

Avoid using social media during meals, when in the bathroom or in bed, and never use social media while driving.

### Buy a Real Alarm Clock

If you use your phone as an alarm, the first thing you'll do each day is stare into that screen.

### Sign Off for a Weekend

A couple of days isn't quite long enough to dispel any anxiety brought on by social media addiction, but a little time away from the screen reminds you how nice life is without all of the status updates.

### Be a Tough Editor

Before you post a status update or a photo, question your motive: Are you just trying to prove that you're having a good time? Is this the fourteenth selfie you've posted this week? If the answer is yes, try chatting with a friend or texting the picture to your mom.

### Alter Your Settings

Disable all alerts and delete addicting apps. When you need to work or are at school, try disabling your Internet connection.



## TEST YOURSELF

1. Escapism means forgetting about the ordinary or unpleasant realities of life for a while and is a component of both social media addiction and drug addiction.  
a. True b. False
2. Everyone who uses social media will absolutely become addicted.  
a. True b. False
3. Poor grades can result in social media addiction.  
a. True b. False
4. What part of the brain is the reward center?  
a. Cerebellum  
b. Occipital Lobe  
c. Parietal Lobe  
d. Nucleus Accumbens
5. What's an acceptable time to use social media?  
a. During class  
b. While driving  
c. During leisure time and with a specific purpose  
d. During a job interview

Answers: 1. a; 2. b; 3. a; 4. d; 5. c

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# SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION



## ADDICTED TO LIKES



## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Any website or cell phone app that allows social interaction is considered social media: including social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; gaming sites and virtual worlds like Sims and Game of War; and video sites such as YouTube and Vine Video.

While all of these sites can be fun and safe, if used in moderation, it is possible to become addicted to them. Social media addiction can even have many of the same side effects as drug addiction.

## HOW CAN A PERSON BECOME ADDICTED?

Scientists have linked the intensity of social media use to the brain's nucleus accumbens—the “reward center”—where we subconsciously get pleasure and reinforcement from certain actions. When a person has positive social feedback, in the form of “Likes” and comments on Facebook for example, there's a heightened activity within this part of their brain.

Just imagine how excited you get when there's a notification after you posted a funny picture or witty status—that's your nucleus accumbens being motivated as it receives a chemical change.

Over time, you start to subconsciously repeat these actions until it becomes a form of addiction.



## NOT ME!

### Who's at Risk?

A number of personality traits appear to be associated with the extent of social media use, but anyone with a healthy nucleus accumbens may possibly become addicted. Researchers have found people with higher narcissistic personality traits tend to be more active on social media in order to present themselves favorably online because the virtual environment empowers them to construct their ideal selves.

Some studies have shown that people with large offline social networks, who are more extroverted, and who have higher self-esteem, use social media for social enhancement. People with only a few offline contacts, who are more introverted, or who have lower self-esteem, use social media for social compensation. It is easier for people who are anxious or socially insecure to communicate via social media than face-to-face.

## THERE ARE WORSE HABITS TO HAVE

### “At least I'm not doing drugs”

Although you may not be experiencing all of the physical side effects of drug or alcohol use, there are a number of psychological or emotional side effects that are very similar. The same addiction criteria that are present with drug abusers are also present in some people who use social networking excessively:



- Loss of focus, which can lead to lower grades or work performance.
- Escapism: using social media to avoid stressful or painful situations happening in reality.
- Mood modifying experiences: using social media to change your mood from bad to good by posting about something positive that happened to you.
- Concealing the addictive behavior. For example, sneaking to use your phone in class because you cannot resist the temptation to check social media.
- Decrease in real life social community participation and academic achievement.
- Increase in relationship problems. A large part of communicating in person involves a lot of non-verbal cues (facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and more). When communicating exclusively through social media, a person does not develop those important skills. Furthermore, more arguments and disagreements develop because tone of voice (sarcasm or joking) may be missed in social media.
- Withdrawals: Feeling anxious or agitated when you can't log in to social media or your phone.

## KNOW THE TRUTH

### Stats and Facts

- Fifty-two percent of adults today use two or more social media sites. This number will only rise as more and more pre-teens and teenagers use social media.
- Sixty-three percent of Americans log on to Facebook.
- Seventy percent of Facebook users log in daily, and forty-five percent login several times a day.
- Social media addiction can be stronger than addiction to cigarettes and alcohol.
- Men use social media an average of eight hours a day; women use social media even longer.
- Social media makes us compare our lives with others. Since people typically post an idealized version of what's happening, users tend to compare themselves to others and think less of their own lives.

## LEARNING TO RELAX

### Candace's Story

Candace lived by the mantra “Text, tweet, sleep, repeat” without ever even realizing it. She was completely addicted to social media, and it affected every part of her day. Right before she would go to sleep, she would browse Twitter or Instagram. When she would wake up in the middle of the night, she would do the same thing. Even after her alarm went off, she felt the need to check her phone to see if she received any messages.

Throughout the day, Candace would constantly check her phone, even though cell phones were prohibited in class. In the courtyard during lunch, Candace would hang out with her group of friends. However, when the conversation started to get “boring,” everyone would pull out their phones and begin scrolling through their favorite social media site. She started to realize she lived in a constant state of anxiety, just waiting for the next notification to appear on her phone.

When Candace's cousins invited her to go camping for Labor Day weekend, she thought, “It sounds fun. I just hope there's cell phone service so I can post pictures of all the fun things we do.” She soon discovered, however, that in the mountains at her cousin's lodge, there was no cell phone service, and Candace was completely cut off from social media. Although she felt anxious for the first few hours at not being able to check social media or texts, she soon began to relax as the weekend went on.

When she got back to school on Monday, her friends immediately asked her, “Where have you been all weekend?!” Candace simply smiled and replied, “I went camping up in the mountains with my cousins, and it was amazing.” Without her phone, Candace felt free. She could truly enjoy what she was doing in the moment. Instead of using social media to avoid the awkward silences, they looked one another in the eye and continued talking. She now still enjoys social media, but it does not consume every minute of her day.

