Teen Social Media Use: How to Help Youth Develop Healthy Social Media Habits

Being connected through smartphones and social media plays a big role in teen culture today. According to Piper Sandler's Taking Stock with Teens survey (2021), teens report they spend an average of 4.2 hours per day on social media. Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram are among the most popular social media platforms used by teenagers. There are positive aspects of social media, but also potential risks, including whether the excessive use of social media can ultimately harm youth mental health. Learning how to support kids in a digital world can pose challenges for parents, educators and other youth-serving advocates. In fact, two-thirds of parents in the U.S. say parenting is harder today than it was 20 years ago, with many citing technologies like social media or smartphones as a reason (Pew Research Center). When it comes to kids and social media, some of the top worries amongst parents include age appropriateness, mean behavior among peers, inappropriate photos or videos that can hurt reputations or attract negative attention, overuse, and privacy issues.

Many experts agree that social media is not inherently bad. Social media can encourage idea sharing, create a sense of community, serve as a means to connect to family and friends from afar, and create awareness of important social movements and involvement in civic causes that may be important to youth.   How teens use social networking, interact with it and interpret it can make a difference in how it affects them. Many studies have found an association between time spent on social media as well as the number of social media platforms used and various mental health concerns. Research suggests that young people who spend more than 2 hours per day on social media are more likely to report poor mental health, including psychological distress. Since social media isn't going away, it is important for adults and teens alike to acknowledge the risks associated with social media networking and learn how to manage those risks.

There are a number of health issues that may develop as a result of too much time online. Some of the adverse risks associated with social media use include poor sleep quality, cyberbullying, depression, high levels of anxiety, low levels of self-esteem and FOMO (fear of missing out). Social media's filtered sense of reality can lead to critically comparing and moments of envy, leading to lower self-esteem and depression. Additionally, excessive monitoring of friends' online behaviors can lead to feelings of exclusion and turn into increased social anxiety. Excessive social media use can also come at the expense of real-world interactions, resulting in more indirect communication. When kids learn to do most of their communication while looking at a screen, they are missing out on very critical social skills including learning how to read social cues. Speaking indirectly also creates a barrier to clear communication and can make it easier to be cruel.

Teenagers need support and education to develop the skills to manage their social media use. There is a great deal of brain development that takes place during the adolescent years. It is important to understand

that individual strengths and vulnerabilities may predispose certain adolescents to engage with and respond to social media in positive or negative ways. There are steps parents and caregivers can take to encourage responsible use of social media and limit some of its negative effects. Consider some of the following suggestions:

- **Teach self-monitoring**- model healthy behaviors with your own social media use.

- **Talk about social media**- talk about your own social media habits. Have regular discussions about what your teen is experiencing online including what they see that is both positive and negative and how they feel when using social media.

- **Set reasonable limits**- talk to your teen about how to avoid letting social media interfere with their activities, sleep, meals and school work. Encourage a bedtime routine that avoids electronic media use (and set an example by following these rules yourself).

- **Explain what's not OK**- discourage your teen from gossiping, spreading rumors, bullying or damaging someone's reputation. Talk to your teen about what's appropriate and safe to share on social media. Encourage your teen to ask themselves the following questions before they post online: Is it true? Is it kind? Would I say it in person? Is it helpful or useful? Will I feel good about it tomorrow?

- **Teach teens how to balance social media with real-life experiences and friends**- encourage opportunities for face-to-face human connection, direct communication and involvement in activities outside of youth's digital world.

- **Monitor your teens social media use**- the more you know about how your teen is interacting on social media, the better you will be able to address any problems.

If you feel your teen is experiencing signs or symptoms of anxiety or depression related to social media use, is upset by what they see, or becomes involved with risky behaviors, talk to your pediatrician, family doctor, or a trained mental health professional. Additional information on social media use and online safety can be found below:

Common Sense Media
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

Connect Safely
http://www.connectsafely.org/

Cyberwise
http://www.cyberwise.org/

Cyberbullying Research Center
https://cyberbullying.org

Family Online Safety Institute
https://www.fosi.org

References: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; Childmind Institute; Common Sense Media; Mayo Clinic; Nemours Kids Health; Pew Research Center

Where Has the Time Gone?

Have you ever been going about your day and then, all of a sudden, it is 3 hours later than you thought? For educators this may happen when you are in your plan period and then it is time for your students to come back to class within the blink of an eye. For students, this may look like going home to do homework or interacting with friends and then it's already time to get ready for bed. Truth be told, educators and students both struggle with time management. People underestimate the struggles educators and students may be having with time management because "it's what you do every day". So, what are the big issues with time management that people are facing, besides the obvious one of having so much to do?

One reason that people struggle with time management is simply that they have so much to do, it is overwhelming. This is referred to as "loaded" procrastination. Many people struggle with procrastination for different reasons. Sometimes there is so much to do with a specific task, like grading or writing papers, that it is overwhelming and people tend to shut down. A trick to help with "loaded" procrastination is to work on "batches" or only a certain amount of the work in one sitting. For example, if you are overwhelmed by how many papers you have to grade, try grading 1/3 or even half of the assignments one day and then finish the rest the next day. If you have multiple assignments to grade, you could grade one assignment a day, or two, if you are feeling extra motivated.

One way to help students who may be struggling with time management issues during the school day would be to write out what the day will look like for them. This could be written on a whiteboard in front of the whole class, so they all know when and what will happen today, or on a piece of paper and then given to that student to follow along with during the day. Make sure to include breaks in the schedule and maybe even a to do list for the student so they know what will be expected of them that day.

Sometimes a person may have good time management practices that work very well, but then a crisis happens that derails those practices. While there are some events that cannot be planned for, like natural disasters or a death in the family, there are coping skills to help get back on track. One way to handle these derailments is to make a list and prioritize what needs to be done and when it is due. It should be a goal for your weekly schedule to be flexible but to have the top priority items done by midweek if at all possible. Of course, if you have a crisis happen, that may not be possible. In that

case, tackle what you can and what is most important to finish first. Again, breaking up what you need to do, one activity at a time, can benefit you by making it less overwhelming. It is very easy to be overwhelmed in these situations, but it is important to stay calm and maybe recruit people, like parents or colleagues, to help with tasks.

The biggest thing that should be planned into your time management routine is to make sure that you have some "you" time. Times have been very stressful lately, for many reasons, and educators and students are both struggling right now. Taking time for yourself should be mandatory so you do not burn out and can provide the best educational experience, not only for the students but for yourself too. Find what you need to do to help you "recharge". This could be working out, going on a walk, playing with pets or your children, talking with friends, date nights, or reading a chapter of a book a day. Do whatever you need to do to stay at the top of your game and hopefully enjoy it too. You also need to be able to say "no" when you have too much on your plate. Adding one more thing to your list will only make matters worse for you and your mental health. Saying "no" has such a stigma attached to it when someone is asked for help but the bottom line is, no one can do everything. Normalize taking care of yourself and saying no when you need to.

References:

Time Management Skills that Improve Student Learning

https://www.acc.edu.au/blog/time-management-skills-student-learning/#:~:text=Effective%20time%20management%20allows%20students,from%20their%20to%2Ddo%20list.

9 Quick Tips for Students Struggling with Time Management

https://todayslearner.cengage.com/build-your-students-time-management-skills/

10 Time Management Secrets from Teachers Who Are Living Their Best Lives

https://www.weareteachers.com/teacher-time-management-secrets/

5 Time Management Tips for Teachers

https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/five-time-management-tips-for-teachers/

10 Ways to Improve Time Management for Students

https://gradepowerlearning.com/10-time-management-tips-students/

Externalizing Behaviors

What exactly are externalizing behaviors? Simply put, externalizing behaviors are those disruptive behaviors that disturb and/or cause harm to others. For example, physical, verbal and emotional aggression toward others, intentionally breaking and/or not following rules, lying, stealing, and vandalizing another person's property are all examples of externalizing behaviors.

Students who display externalizing behaviors do so for a variety of different reasons. These include the death of someone close to them; divorce or separation of parents; loss of friendship/s; domestic violence at home; homelessness; learning disabilities, mental, emotional and/or hormonal imbalances etc. And the list could go and on.

So, how do teachers/school personnel address students who are exhibiting externalizing behaviors?

First, it is helpful to figure out what might be causing a student to exhibit externalizing behaviors. Remember, behavior is a form of communication, so determining the cause and/or purpose of the disruptive behavior can help teachers effectively help and/or meet student needs.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that while the behaviors may vary from student to student, the purpose of the behaviors is typically either to get something or to avoid something.

For instance, a student who constantly disrupts class by trying to be funny or yelling out answers without being called upon might be communicating a need for attention. Rather than just responding to the behavior as it occurs, try to be proactive and make an effort to give that student your attention or the attention of the class in a more constructive, planned out manner.

For example, you might allow the student who often makes jokes or blurts out answers an opportunity during the school day/week to tell an appropriate and light-hearted joke or two or give them the opportunity to be the one who answers a few school subject questions and then call upon other students who raise their hand.

Of course, as most teachers know, the example above is not a fix all for all students who blurt out answers or make jokes. Teachers know that the same strategy does not work for every student displaying the same kind of disruptive behavior. The same disruptive behavior displayed by students, such as yelling out answers or making jokes, might be conveying a completely different need and/or being used to avoid different kinds of situations and/or consequences.

Using the same example from before, where a student blurts out answers and/or makes untimely/inappropriate jokes, in this instance, instead of seeking out attention like the first student, this particular student is actually looking to receive a consequence where they aren't allowed to go out for recess. Why? Because they are being bullied by a student from another class that is on the playground at the same time or because they don't have anyone that will play or interact with them during recess.

As one can see, often times, it takes a lot of time, energy and patience to effectively direct and redirect and/or effectively address externalizing behaviors. With all the pressures that teachers and school personnel are under, especially during the last two years, it can become very draining, both physically and emotionally. That is one of the reasons why Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is so important and necessary in schools.

What exactly is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)? SEL is the process of helping students develop the skills to manage their emotions, regulate their behaviors, appropriately resolve conflict, and make responsible decisions. This is done by incorporating skill building activities and lesson plans within subject matter students are already required to do.

There is over 20 years of research that shows that SEL makes a positive difference. We further know that SEL programs have a wide range of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, healthy relationships and mental wellness of students.

However, it must also be noted that even the best SEL programs are not a fix-all answer to some student's externalizing behaviors. Some students will need additional and/or outside services and treatment. Being proactive and having a system in place to help facilitate and connect families and students to outside resources and services is extremely helpful to all involved.

For more information and resources on externalizing behaviors, SEL programs and/or about the SCIP program, please visit www.scipnebraska.com

https://www.verywellfamily.com › how-tweens-teens-ex...

https://faq-ans.com › ...

https://www.cdc.gov › classroom-management › behavi...

*www.cfchildren.org/**second-step***