

Social Media and Body Dysmorphia

Social media websites have been a common topic of conversation in mental health spaces for several years. At their advent, they served as methods of connecting students in college with one another. They now function to connect the entire population with everyone else. While we once relied on these websites solely for socialization and entertainment, the scope is much wider now. One study found that nineteen percent of people get their news from social media feeds. Furthermore, these people tend to consider the news found on social media as more reliable than traditional newsprint or news networks. Viral marketing and social media have become integral to operating a small business, especially for up-and-coming small businesses. While the ability for social media to provide these functions can dramatically improve people's lives, its ubiquity in most everyone's lives has many consequences. While anxiety and depression are both linked to high social media use, one concern that tends to be overlooked is the tie between social media and body dysmorphia disorder.

Those using social media tend to engage in a high rate of social comparison. Particularly on websites like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, people are encouraged to constantly see photos and videos of their friends' lives. This leads people into feeling immense pressure to put up a constant façade of perfection on their social media pages. Editing and curation of all photos on their page becomes mandatory in order to ensure they appear their best. Consequently, those visiting their friends' pages see the false perfection on display and feel that they must also only show their best face online. A feedback loop forms from this, where many people using these platforms habitually feel an intense need to compete with one another. For many young people, who are still in the process of exploring their own identity and self-worth, this can cause extremely detrimental mental health concerns.

In one study, teens were questioned about their social media use, and then evaluated for symptoms of body dysmorphia disorder (BDD). This study found that for those who use image-based social media (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram), symptoms of BDD were 16% more prevalent. These symptoms can include:

- Extreme Preoccupation with perceived flaws in one's appearance
- Persistent skin-picking and self-checking
- Strong belief that one is being perceived as ugly
- Hiding and masking behaviors for the perceived flaw, such as hiding parts of the body with scarves, clothing, or make-up
- Avoidance of photos and mirrors
- Unwillingness to attend social situations
- Feelings of anxiety and depression
- Thoughts of suicide

Body dysmorphia can cause people to take on extremely unhealthy habits. For many it can start as simply being particular about photos taken of them. However, as symptoms grow stronger, BDD can lead to maladaptive habits like those listed above. For those who are preoccupied with their weight, eating disorders may develop. One study found that one third of those who have BDD

develop an eating disorder at some point in their life. The inverse holds true as well, with many of those with anorexia and bulimia developing BDD. Additionally, the focuses of concern tend to be different based on gender. While concerns related to acne and facial features appear across the board, young women tend to focus on body shape, figure, and skin. Meanwhile, young men tend to focus on muscle size and tone, overall body size, and thickness of hair.

If you are concerned that your child may be developing Body Dysmorphia Disorder, the first step is to speak to a healthcare provider or mental health professional. As one ages with the condition, symptoms tend to worsen. For those who are struggling with comparing themselves on social media, taking a “social media vacation” can be the first step in improving their self-image. It could even be beneficial to simply move away from the image-based websites and focus on text-based social media, such as Reddit or Threads. It could help to schedule out the day to prevent mindless scrolling, while also promoting healthy decisions like screen-free time, exercise, socializing, and reading.

For more information on the link between social media and BDD, please visit the following resources:

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/social-media-and-body-image>

<https://www.ktblegal.com/blog/2023/september/how-social-media-use-can-cause-body-dysmorphia/>

<https://damorementalhealth.com/social-media-and-body-dysmorphia/>

<https://www.rush.edu/news/combating-social-media-dysmorphia>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10471190/>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/body-dysmorphic-disorder>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/body-dysmorphic-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20353938>

<https://bdd.iocdf.org/expert-opinions/the-body-as-a-prison-eating-disorders-and-body-dysmorphic-disorder/#:~:text=Yes.,areas%20other%20than%20their%20weight.>

<https://emilyprogram.com/blog/the-relationship-between-eating-disorders-and-social-media/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5003636/>

Fentanyl: Youth Prevention

According to officials with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Fentanyl is the deadliest drug threat facing our nation. Fentanyl is a highly addictive synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin, and up to 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl is not only very strong, but it is relatively cheap to produce. Drug traffickers are increasingly mixing it with other types of drugs in powder or pill form, increasing its presence in illicit street drugs. The DEA lab testing has found that 7 out of every 10 pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose. In 2023, the DEA seized more than 79.5 million fentanyl laced fake pills and nearly 12, 000 pounds of fentanyl powder.

The drug landscape is ever changing and the way in which youth access drugs is vastly different compared to earlier generations.

According to the DEA, many drug traffickers are using social media to advertise drugs and conduct sales. While fentanyl can be hidden in a variety of substances, counterfeit pills that contain fentanyl are a common concern. Fentanyl laced fake prescription pills are frequently made to look like Xanax, hydrocodone, Vicodin, or Adderall. Thanks to social media and other online channels they are easy to buy. A young person buying illicit drugs may think they know what they're getting, but there is a risk of it containing fentanyl, and that risk could be deadly.

COUNTERFEIT DRUGS



SOURCE: DEA

With the increase in fentanyl laced substances, it is important for adults and caregivers to recognize the signs of a fentanyl overdose. If you suspect someone has overdosed, call 911 immediately. Naloxone is a lifesaving medication that can rapidly reverse the effects of an overdose, if given in time. Overdose symptoms may include:

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing; limp body
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Cold and/or clammy skin

So how do we prevent fentanyl from getting into the hands of our kids? The DEA encourages parents and caregivers to start by educating themselves on current drug threats as a means to engage in informed conversations with youth. As with any type of substance use prevention education, it is a conversation that has to be ongoing and happen more than once. Below are some points to consider when talking to kids and teens about fentanyl.

- *It is never too early to talk to kids about drug use, especially the dangers of Fentanyl. Using age-appropriate language, start with a conversation about making healthy decisions as a means to ease into the heavy conversation of fentanyl.*
- *Listen first: ask your youth non-judgmental questions. Is fentanyl something that you have heard about in the news or at school? What have you heard?*
- *Explain the facts: explain what fentanyl is and why it is so dangerous. Stress that fentanyl in any form can be deadly.*
- *Stress not to take any pills that were not prescribed to them by their doctor.*
- *Send a message to youth that all drugs are potentially dangerous and many of them can contain fentanyl. There is no way to recognize if the drugs someone is buying on the street or online are contaminated with fentanyl and even small amounts of fentanyl can lead to overdose.*
- *Make sure your child knows that the danger of fentanyl is not limited to drugs bought from a stranger on the street or online. Dispel the myth that drugs bought from ‘trusted sources’ including friends or known dealers are safe. The person selling or sharing the drugs may not even know that what they are distributing contains fentanyl.*

Below are some additional resources to increase awareness of the dangers of fentanyl and engage in conversations with youth.

The DEA “One Pill Can Kill” Initiative offers some great resources for parents and educators to learn more about Fentanyl. <https://www.dea.gov/onepill>

What Every Parent and Caregiver Needs to Know About Fake Pills

https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/DEA-OPCK_Parent_Flyer_September_2023.pdf

Emoji Drug Code: Decoded- A quick reference guide to give parents, caregivers, and educators a better sense of how emojis are being used in conjunction with illegal drugs

https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Emoji%20Decoded_FO%20One%20Page_v2.pdf

Buying Drugs Online: What You Should Know and How to Protect Your Kids

<https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/family/buying-drugs-online-%E2%80%93-what-you-should-know-how-protect-your-kids>

Natural High Fentanyl Toolkit- a resource for parents and educators to help protect kids from the dangers of fentanyl.

<https://www.naturalhigh.org/fentanyl/>

References: <https://facingfentanylnow.org/>; Get Smart About Drugs; Nationwide Children’s; Natural High; Partnership to End Addiction; United States Drug Enforcement Administration

TALK TO YOUR TEEN

Your conversation can make a difference.

When emotions run high, teenagers might turn to alcohol or drugs to cope. Not only is this a problem because their brains are still developing, but often they turn to social media to purchase these substances from strangers which end up being fake pills laced with fentanyl.

Talk to your teens about the risks of substance use and order your box of no-cost NARCAN® Nasal Spray today.

SCAN HERE TO ORDER NO-COST NARCAN



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