

NATIONAL DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SCREENING MONTH

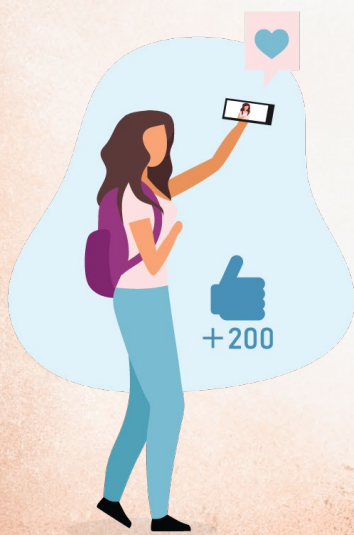
IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH BY TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Today, 72% of Americans use social media¹ and more than half of teens say it would be difficult to give up social media.² The impact of social media has some positive benefits, but it can also lead to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and loneliness.³

Social Networking: Risks vs. Rewards

Social networking, including the quantity and quality of our social relationships, affects our mental health, physical health and behavior. Social media activates the brain's reward center by releasing dopamine, a "feel-good chemical" that is linked to pleasurable activities. For example, we post content on social media in hopes of positive feedback which, in turn, releases dopamine and makes us feel good.⁴

The negative impacts of social media include people comparing themselves to others, a fear of missing out because they don't want to be excluded from experiences, or constantly checking platforms to see likes and comments. Social media platforms are addictive and designed to keep people coming back. Unfortunately, the risks can outweigh the rewards. With so many people using social media, and many using it for hours at a time or multiple times a day, a large proportion of the population is at an increased risk of feeling anxious, depressed or ill over their social media use.⁵



Distract Yourself From the Distraction

Social media can help you feel connected, but it can also be overwhelming and a habit that may not serve you well.

Here are some tips to improve your social media experience and mental wellbeing⁶:

- **Know your goal.** Are you using it to keep up with family members or catch up on the news? Plan to check in only once daily and log off once you achieve your goal.
- **Think about how your feeds make you feel.** Rate your emotions on a scale of 1-10 before and after you use social media. If you notice one makes you less happy, consider changing how you use it.
- **Do not compare your everyday life with the lives people post online.** People post the shiny parts of their lives and are less likely to share struggles or disappointments. Remember, people are imperfect and life has ups and downs.
- **Take control of your feeds.** Take charge and turn off news alerts. Unfollow or hide feeds that stress you out. Track your time on social media and decide if that is what you want to be doing.
- **Follow the feel-good stuff.** Do not let the social media platform determine what you see. Search out things that make you happy and add them to your feeds.
- **Step away from your screens.** Take time to unplug. Read a book, talk to a friend, get outside or do something you find supportive and worth your time.

¹ Pew Research Center

² Pew Research Center

³ HelpGuide.org

⁴ McLean Hospital

⁵ National Institutes of Health

⁶ Healthwise