

Is social media making people depressed?

Anyone who regularly uses social media will have had the experience of feeling envious of the fun their friends seem to be having. This might especially be the case if you're sitting at home on a cold evening, feeling bored while everyone else is partying or having glamorous holidays in the sun.

But is it possible that these feelings could be the start of something worse? Could using social media actually make you depressed? A recent study identified a "strong and significant association between social media use and depression in young adults". The study found that levels of depression were higher in people who spend a lot of time using social media.

The best thing about social media is that it permits us to connect with friends and people we don't see very often or when we don't have much free time. The worst thing about social media is that it can give us feelings of inadequacy.

There are probably many complex reasons why social media use might be associated with depression. For example, it is possible that people who are already depressed might be more inclined to use social media instead of face-to-face interactions, so greater social media use may be a symptom rather than a cause of depression.

An unsatisfactory cure

We all have a basic need to be liked and accepted by others and social media can play with this vulnerability. People who have low self-esteem may try to attract "likes" to their post and comments as a way of increasing their self-esteem. In this way, social media can be a popularity contest. Of course, "winning" the popularity contest by having the most likes is only a short-term boost to morale. It's a precarious way to boost self-esteem.

It is human nature to compare ourselves to others. Sometimes comparison can be a way to inspire ourselves to improve in some way, but, more often than not – especially when someone is feeling down – the comparisons become negative, and affect self-esteem. One problem with social media is that the image people show tends to be positive, interesting and exciting. Let's face it, most of us would rather post a photograph looking great on a night out than one where we are in our pyjamas, washing the dishes. If someone is feeling down or dissatisfied with their life then, instead of being a bit of a distraction, social media use can give the impression that everyone else is having way more fun than we are.

1) True or false?

- A. The article is about a study that connects depression and the use of social media. TRUE FALSE
- B. Social media has absolutely no advantages (good aspects). TRUE FALSE
- C. It is possible, according to the article, that social media is not always the cause of depression. TRUE FALSE
- D. For some people getting a lot of likes is very important. TRUE FALSE
- E. Using social media for likes and a popularity contest have nothing in common. TRUE FALSE

2) Look for words in the text that mean...

- A. In a special way (paragraph 1)
- B. Really (paragraph 2)
- C. More (of something) (paragraph 4)
- D. Something that doesn't last very long (paragraph 5)
- E. Interesting and full of action (paragraph 6)

3) Match the halves to make sentences that summarize the article

Social media has both

sure it is the cause,

Some people depend a lot

it may make you feel badly.

A study has investigated the connection

advantages and disadvantages.

But they aren't completely

best pictures of themselves.

People usually post the

on the likes they get to feel well.

So, if you aren't feeling so well

between social media and depression.