Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension

You are going to read an extract from an article. For questions 1 – 6, choose the answer (A, B, C, or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

The Psychology of Quitting Social Media

Extract from an article written by Clay Drinko, Ph.D., and published on the Psychology Today website on February 22, 2025.

I finally did it. I ditched Instagram completely. Instagram isn't the first social media platform I've dropped. I'm no spring chicken and have divorced Friendster, Myspace, Twitter (when it was still called that), Facebook, and TikTok. You see, I love to be in the loop and know the latest trends. I love to catch a pop culture reference while chitchatting around the water cooler. So chasing these social media trends felt right to me. I want to be connected.

But I've also always gotten fed up at some point and arguably addicted to some of these platforms. It sometimes felt like gambling in Vegas to post something and see if I'd hit the jackpot with those likes and shares. At a certain point, I think I forgot why I was even posting in the first place.

Plus, social media platforms change over time. It used to be OK to post a mediocre photo on Instagram. Now, it feels like I need a professional film studio and production crew to churn out engaging videos. Like I said before, I'm no spring chicken and not loving feeling pressure to look young and cool in video format.

So last month, I ditched Instagram for good. I still have LinkedIn and my loyal email subscriber list on www.playyourwaysane.com, but those things feel decidedly not addictive. I never pull my phone out and check to see if anything fun is happening on LinkedIn because I know that it's not, and that's refreshing.

But this social media breakup feels different. I'm not replacing Instagram with the hottest new thing, which got me thinking, What happens to us when we ditch social media? Temporarily, permanently, after over two decades?

Social media does indeed work like gambling. With social media, behaviors like checking your notifications or feed are reinforced by rewards like seeing that someone liked your post or commented something complimentary about you. The thing that makes it super addictive is that these behavioral rewards aren't consistent. I don't know if I'm going to get zero likes or a thousand, and it's that variable reinforcement that really keeps us coming back for more.

One study found that short breaks from Facebook decreased stress levels, especially in excessive social media users. There's not a lot of research on ditching social media yet, so this

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study feels important and enlightening. When people become so reliant on and attached to social media, reduced stress doesn't seem like the only possible outcome. I've seen students extremely stressed out because they were asked to put their phones away before an exam. But this study is one tiny clue that a digital detox might help you feel less stressed, and it might go back to ditching those variably reinforced rewards. Yes, it feels great when you hit big and lots of people respond to your post, but it feels crummy when something doesn't land. Taking a break from the ups and downs seems to lower stress levels, generally speaking.

It's not all good news. Another study showed that leaving social media increases loneliness. In the study, which consisted of 68 participants, some ditched social media, and others didn't. Importantly, it was a randomized study with a control group (the keep social media crew). The study found that abstaining from social media not only increased loneliness but also decreased life satisfaction and increased negative affect (anger, sadness, fear, and guilt). What do we make of these findings? I thought social media was bad for us and stressed us out.

It depends on why we're using social media in the first place. I'd love to tell everyone to ditch social media and then promise it would mean you'd all live happily ever after, but it turns out that it's much more complicated than that. If social media is how we connect with others, especially if it's the primary way we connect, then of course we'll feel worse when it's gone.

However, remember that the people in the study were randomized. That means they didn't decide if they would be in the abstain from social media group or the carry on as usual group, and intention matters here. If you're thinking about ditching social media, you're probably doing an inventory of the pros and cons. It's not just being ripped away from you without your consent.

On average, people spend over two hours on social media each day. So if you finally do decide to quit for good, you'll have a lot more time on your hands.

Now that I'm off social media, I have time to learn a second language, time to go to the gym every day, time to write this post, time to write a novel, time to grade papers and create lesson plans, time to go to the roller rink with my kids, time to plan a trip around the world I may never even take, time to dream, and time to think.

Two hours a day amounts to a month of extra time each year. And knowing that might be the best justification for finally logging off for good.

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1. According to research cited in the article, what is one benefit of temporarily quitting social media?

A) Increased ability to multitask.

B) Reduced stress from emotional fluctuations.

C) Higher levels of creativity and productivity.

D) A stronger desire to reconnect online.

2. What was a key finding from the randomized controlled study with 68 participants?

A) Participants reported fewer negative emotions when quitting.

B) Participants became more socially active offline.

C) Quitting led to increased loneliness and reduced life satisfaction.

D) Quitting had no measurable effect on emotions.

3. Why might the outcomes of the randomized study differ from voluntary social media breaks?

A) Participants were already heavy users of social media.

B) Being forced to quit can feel emotionally different from choosing to quit.

C) Participants were not allowed to use any form of technology.

D) The study only included participants over the age of 50.

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4. Which of the following strategies does the article suggest to mitigate loneliness after quitting social media?

A) Spending more time on online forums.

B) Following news sites instead of social platforms.

C) Strengthening offline relationships and planning real-life interactions.

D) Substituting social media with streaming services.

5. What does the article recommend people reflect on when conducting a "usage inventory"?

A) The number of hours spent online per week.

B) The personal motivations and goals behind using social media.

C) The differences between platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

D) The influence of advertisements on their online behavior.

6. What overall message does the article convey about quitting social media?

A) It is universally beneficial for emotional health.

B) It always leads to stronger offline relationships.

C) Its effects are mixed, depending on how and why people quit.

D) It should only be attempted by light users of social media.

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