

CHRISTINE HINSON: THE DESTRUCTIVE SIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Hello, my name is Christine, and today I will be talking to you about social media, not only the deceptively positive aspects of social media, but also the destructive side to social media.

Social media is a large digital tool used in everyday activities for interactive communications, sharing of media and for generic entertainment. We all know these things may seem to be beneficial; however, social media does more damage than we think.

I am guessing most of you here have social media and love having a place that meets your entertainment needs, but how many of you here are aware of the destructive impact of social media and not just the continuous ones that we hear of i.e. cyberbullying?

If you are not aware then let me inform you, and let me ask you this instead: how many of you have ever sat there for hours wasting away a potentially productive day, on fixing your eyes on a screen? How many of you find it hard to put your phone down for even an hour?

Well you are not alone! An average person checks their phone at least 28 times a day which amounts to 10,000 times a year. In that year, we can spend an average of 2-4 hours on platforms a day without realising. Yes, social media is becoming a major distraction and slowly an addiction.

Let us think, how many of us can go without any form of social media from any time up till a month... not many I am guessing.

Social media can be a place for positive reinforcement where people can be self-expressive if they have trouble doing so to people around them. Social media can be used for emotional support, character building and a place to find others who may share the same interests as you.

I mean there is no harm done in these ways, but the real problem is the fact that the negatives of social media greatly outweigh these positives. Things such as body image, sleep and concentration at school, self-esteem and human connection are greatly affected by the excessive use of social media. For example, spending long hours on social media can slowly detach people from the concept of reality, the ability to communicate with individuals. Growing up and going into a working environment can be impacted if you are not able to engage effectively with colleagues.

When we are being entertained, when we become excited about how many likes on Instagram we get and how we look, a hormone called dopamine is released which causes us to feel "satisfied". How then is this satisfaction fulfilled when you receive a negative comment, or a form of criticism? We are greatly influenced by the things we see and these things cause us to negatively compare ourselves and view ourselves differently.

And speaking of the brain, 90% of the information processed by the brain is visual and of those images, it only takes 13 milliseconds for the brain to process each one. From this statistic it is important for us to visually absorb things that will be healthy for us. We need to learn how to take a break from social media, relax, take a walk when needed, listen to music detox.

Try to build non virtual relations with people around you, set time aside to focus on more beneficial things in life, try and avoid this terrible yet easy cycle of social media.

Thank you for listening.