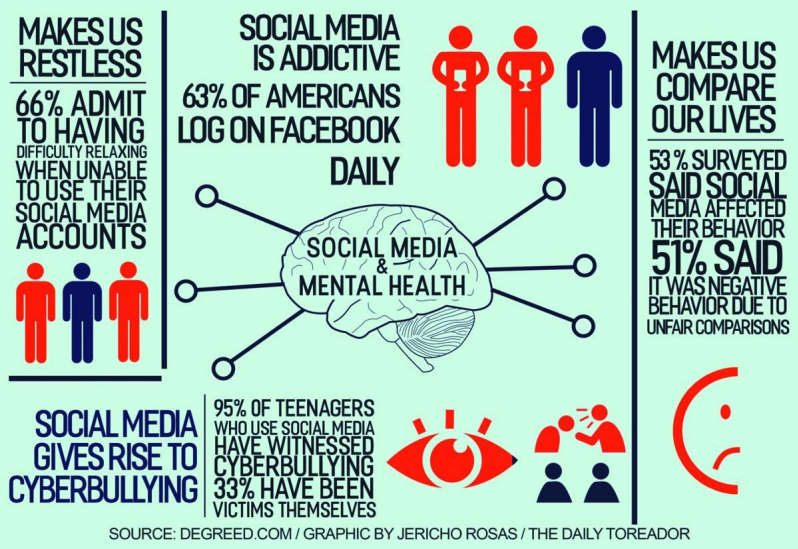
Is Social Media Creating Social Issues?

By Sammy Hurst



Many people worry about the effects technology has on the development of toddlers and young children, but that should not be their only concern. With such an expansive presence of technology and social media in adolescence and young adult's lives, experts worry that this exposure is increasing anxiety, lowering self- esteem, and disrupting regular social interactions. Since these years are still a time of rapid development, we must pay close attention to the impact these technological advancements are making on our lives.

As a young adult myself, this topic is something that I can relate to on a personal level. Throughout my life, technology has seemed to grow alongside me, playing an integral role in my development as a young woman. I have experienced and witnessed, first-hand, the transformation of communication, accessibility, and exposure, that technology has made on the world. While it is true that technology and the internet are incredible and useful tools benefitting our daily lives, they have also drastically changed our society and the relationships we had once established with one another.

The first way technology and social media have remarkably impacted society is by increasing anxiety among the adolescent and young adult community. As people are constantly texting, emailing, snapchatting, updating their status, or sharing their location, they have created a community that is hyper connected. This means there is never a time where we are truly alone, which produces anxiety in and of itself. Ironically, it is still easy for people to feel lonely in the midst of this hyper connection. If a friend takes a while to reply, or if someone posts something about an event they weren't invited to, it causes kids to feel ignored and depressed. These kinds of interactions leave people imagining the worst of themselves and feeling unworthy of others, which is detrimental to their mental health.

Technology and social media also have a negative effect on adolescents and young adults by lowering their self-esteem. This is particularly noticeable in young women, for they are more likely to compare themselves to others. As people spend hours upon hours scrolling through others' feeds and trying to project the perfect image of themselves, they fail to realize that everyone is just putting up a front. Though people have always had these kinds of thoughts, how great everyone seems, their feeds and see "when kids scroll through their feeds and see how great everyone seems, it only adds to the pressure" (Ehmke, 2017).

Personally, as a twenty-year old female, I have these thoughts more often than not, and I must admit that I play into the 'imposture syndrome' too, where I only post what makes my image look good. Although this is important for my future work and business plans, it is not an accurate depiction of who I am in real life. There are so many aspects that contribute to who I am as a person and though it may seem as if I live a perfect life, I don't. Using myself as an example, I think it's important for us to keep in mind that everyone faces challenges, so these accounts are not a true representation of who we are.

Finally, technology and social media has disrupted social interactions among adolescents and young adults. Not only does communicating indirectly create a barrier, but it inhibits people from making lasting relationships. This is because people are communicating through a screen, rather than looking at another person. Clinical psychologist, Dr. Catherine Steiner- Adair, mentions how, "as a species we are very highly attuned to reading social cues," however, kids are missing that these days (2017). She goes on further to say that online communication, "puts everybody in a nonverbal disabled context, where body language, facial expression, and even the smallest kinds of vocal reactions are rendered invisible" (2017). Therefore, people need to get more practice getting their needs met in person and in real time, so they know how to function properly as an adult in professional, casual, and romantic settings.

Technology and social media are vital resources for our success in today's times, however we must keep in mind the danger that they can bring to our lives. As our exposure is increasing anxiety, lowering self-esteem, and disrupting regular social interactions amongst adolescents and young adults, we must try to prohibit this from continuing. Every individual should be able to utilize these advancements as a beneficial tool, without weakening their relationships with others, or them self.

Resources

Ehmke, R. (2017). How Using Social Media Affects Teenagers. Retrieved February 06, 2018, from https://childmind.org/article/how- using-social-media-affects-teenagers/