

Opinion

Is Social Media Turning People Into Narcissists?

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Social media was intended to build a community by bridging gaps between people regardless of the constraints of time and distance, however, in stark contrast to its intent, it has become an outlet for narcissistic individuals to self-promote. Some use their social media accounts as platforms strictly for self-promotion - places to seek attention and acclaim by taking up an oversized amount of space in social media feeds, often using hashtags to draw more attention to their posts.

A study assessing the correlation between narcissistic individuals and Instagram use found evidence that narcissistic individuals self-promoted on Instagram more than self-effacing individuals, and had far more followers. This discovery is consistent with what many people know to be true of narcissists - they do well in an environment where there are shallow relationships and opportunities to advertise.

Other studies have shown that millennials are by far the most narcissistic generation - so can we pin the blame on social media for this generational increase in narcissism? Researchers would say with certainty, yes. Social media has warped into this platform for people to look special, gain status and self-esteem by way of perfectly edited pictures, "selfies," provocative photos, and an obsession with the amount of likes and comments received.

News feeds are populated with the most attractive bits of news about people, and the trouble with this is that it paints for these people, as well as their following, such an unrealistic portrait of themselves. This leads to a high concentration of insecurity on behalf of those negatively comparing themselves to others and they end up feeling worse about themselves as a result. This insecurity and negative comparison can have serious, damaging effects if not taken seriously. Depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphia are just a few of the dangers associated with prolonged insecurity.

Narcissism may be inherent, but also an inevitable reaction to our social culture. In a world where media is dominated by a reality as false as the Kardashians, this may not come as a surprise. Our society idolizes this false sense of reality which is perpetuated by social media. Social media promotes the longing for material possessions, popularity, and unrealistic beauty standards. With Kim Kardashian as one of the leading Instagram users, it isn't shocking that people are modeling similar behavior.

Confidence is a beautiful thing. However, truly confident people wouldn't waste their time meticulously cultivating a false version of themselves. People will be perpetually disappointed when their true self doesn't match the image they've created for themselves online.

Social media gives narcissists an opportunity to escape from prevailing constraints and present themselves in a way that would be hardly possible in public. People get so caught up in their portrayal on sites like Instagram that they focus solely on online growth, rather than real, intrinsic growth. You can edit a picture until you look nearly perfect, but the truth is that real growth can only happen within yourself, offline - in real time.

Works Cited

Lebowitz, Shana. "Narcissists Can Hide in Plain Sight on Instagram - Here Are 7 Signs You're Following One." *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 10 Jan. 2018, www.businessinsider.com/narcissists-habits-instagram-2018-1.