

Social media [isn't even 30](#) years old yet. Social media in the way we think of it in today's sense (iPhones, TikTok, AI-based algorithms, etc.) is barely 20.

In other words, the true impact of social media on humanity is yet to be revealed.

It's changed a lot since the launch of its initial platforms in the late 90s and early 2000s. Those pioneers evolved from sharing status updates and static images to being able to also livestream, make audio and video calls, do a wide variety of online shopping and more.

For many people, personally and professionally, social media has become an integral aspect of their everyday lives. The different ways that social media impacts our lives can be vast; sometimes it can be beneficial, but other times can cause great harm, especially to adolescents and teenagers whose minds are still developing.

In this article, we're going to take a closer look at the negative effects of social media on mental health, and how those effects are taking a toll on younger demographics.

## The impact of social media

One of the greatest misconceptions in our society is that because something feels good, it couldn't possibly be bad. The belief that the peak of pleasure could never have a consequence of the deepest pain — but it happens all the time. To all of us.

Shopping can be fun, but overspending can lead to debt and other financial problems. Substance use gives an enjoyable high, but the crash can be brutal, and abuse can lead to addiction. Sex can feel great, but in the wrong circumstances (cheating, adultery), it can destroy hearts, relationships, and entire families.

Social media seems harmless to many, but frequent use can and often does exacerbate [sleep disorders, bullying behaviors, addictive tendencies and poor mental health](#).

The average teenager spends [the equivalent of a 40-hour work week](#) on their phone; time spent on social media accounts for about half of that, around [5 hours per day](#).

Social media is one of the fastest-growing and widely unrecognized addictions of the twenty-first century, and it's crashing through demographics — starting with children.

## Why is social media so addicting?

Social media enables the users to get drawn into the “infinite scroll,” an intentional design structure within apps that allows users to continuously discover and consume more content without ever having to stop.

Think about it — have you ever reached the “bottom” of the feed before?

You can't. There isn't one.

The main reason people get drawn into the infinite scroll is the constant dopamine hits they experience by absorbing such a wide variety of content. Dopamine is linked to the brain's pleasure and reward system; when your senses experience something that brings you emotional or physical pleasure, you experience a dopamine rush, or a hit.

Just as social media offers an infinite scroll, it also offers infinite dopamine hits. You watch a video that makes you laugh and you like that feeling, so you scroll. You see a video of delicious food that makes your mouth water, and you want what? More. You scroll and see a video of an attractive person, your heart leaps, and you scroll again.

What are you searching for? You're not exactly sure... but you know you want *more*.

## Common effects of social media

You might be surprised to learn that social media can influence you in far deeper ways than you're aware of, and as a result, can take a toll on nearly every area of our lives.

Humans have never absorbed such a vast and varied amount of content on a daily basis, so it's no surprise we're not mentally or emotionally equipped to handle it.

The effects of social media on mental health can be serious, ranging from causing mild anxiety and insecurities, to exacerbating or triggering self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

Additional effects of social media include:

- Unrealistic social comparison (both and life)
- Cyberbullying and the promotion of radicalized ideations
- Insomnia and other sleep pattern dysfunctions
- Exposure to disturbing or over-sexualized content
- Compulsive and addictive behaviors
- Loss of creativity and productivity

Since teenagers and young adults are in such a transitional (often, overwhelming) phase of life, it can be difficult to differentiate symptoms of normal teenage exhaustion from symptoms rooted in a mental health condition.

When in doubt, ask for some guidance; you aren't expected to handle this alone.

## Speak with an advisor today

Every child is different, all of their needs unique. Whether your child is ready to be enrolled in one of our mental health programs or not, we're here to help.

Our team at [REDACTED] is committed to providing your teen with the highest level of care possible. We recognize that no two people are alike, and focus on providing individualized support to each of our clients. The treatment plan your teen will have been tailored specifically for them, to meet each of their needs.

[REDACTED] to speak with one of our admissions advisors today and learn more about what the best next steps for your teen are. You're never alone in this.