

## Social Media & it's Effects

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If you look around right now, how many people do you see on their phones. I'm guessing you can at last see one person, if not many more. Regardless of if you are from the Silent Generation or Gen Z, you spend a fair amount of time on social media. Social media and its addictive design are a huge reason for everyone being on their phones. These 15-second videos being added to every platform are designed to exploit your brain and keep you on the app, creating an addiction to the like of cocaine and heroin. Companies like Meta are a reincarnation of Purdue Pharma, creating an entirely new addiction epidemic, just instead of drugs, its technology.

These short videos release dopamine with each watch, just like OxyContin did with each pill. Your brain learns that it can get a fix from these creating an addiction that is very hard to stop. We try to seek out these videos in order to get that release, and it is just like trying to seek out the next high like a junkie. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life wasting so much of your life on social media?

Not only are massive tech companies getting you addicted to social media just like the huge pharmacy companies did for the opioid epidemic, but they are also profiting just as much, if not more. These companies don't have to continue producing the contents that are keeping people addicted. All they must do is keep making sure the app is working well, and they get all the money from the advertising. They are not doing the work to make the money, you are. You are funding these massive multi-billion-dollar companies simply by giving them hours and hours of your time, watching countless advertisements in the process of doing so.

Not to mention, while you sit on your bed and waste hours of your time making other people money, you are making yourself feel worse. Many of society's current issues like mental health are exacerbated by social media. The models you are following on social media may look perfect, but there is so much editing to make them look that way. Still, we don't think about that aspect of it, and all we can think about is 'why can't I look that way' or 'I wish I looked like she does.' So many issues like anxiety and depression come from these sorts of things. Many other forms like fear of missing out and wanting to live the lives of so called "influencers" actively contribute to these negative feelings.

Right now, you may be thinking, 'Oh I don't have a social media addiction, I'm absolutely in control of when I go on it or not.' Okay, props to you if you feel that way, but let's test it. Look at your phone and see; how much time do you spend on social media a day? Is it 30 minutes? One hour? Two hours? The average amount of time spent on social media across the world is around two hours and 27 minutes according to Oberlo<sup>1</sup> and others. This is a lot of time

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<sup>1</sup> Lin, Y. (n.d.). *How much time does the average person spend on social media?* Oberlo

that could be spent doing other, more productive things that will help to better our own lives and help us feel more fulfilled, rather than trying to live our lives through someone else.

I'm not trying to put myself on a pedestal either. Last week, I spent an average of about 3.2 hours on social media, or at least what Apple defines social media as. To me, I see that number and I say to myself, "Damn, you need to work on that." My goal right now is to be below that 2.5-hour mark in a month because I feel as though it takes a toll on my motivation and I feel like I can be doing more productive things, just like so many others. We all should be trying to limit our usage in the same way, but it truly isn't that easy. We need to work to try and stop companies from taking advantage of the human brain, just to make a profit. The problem that could be ran into is that any information about the addictive properties of social media could be silenced by the very companies that are getting you addicted.

This is a movement that needs to happen outside of social media, through both the action of the people and the government. We all know that politics are something very dividing currently, but this issue does not have to do with whether you are red or blue, this has to do with human rights. It should not be legal to take advantage of the human brain like these companies are doing. They should not be able to keep making these apps more and more addictive, all while downplaying how addictive it is, just like Purdue Pharma did with OxyContin. We need to rally together to stop the exploitation of consumers through social media.

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