

Social Media and Mental Health

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The internet and social media are great tools for keeping in touch, connecting with others, supporting important causes, gathering information, and even finding creative inspiration. However, it is important to pay attention to your social media usage, and how it is making you feel. This article is intended to help you assess your relationship with social media, and to provide you with tips for keeping that relationship useful and fulfilling.



(image credit: SnappyGoat.com)

How much time are you spending on social media?

It may be helpful to think about how much time you spend on social media, and when you choose to engage with it. Many people check in with social media during their “free time,” while in transit, waiting in line, or waiting for a class to start. Others may dedicate specific time in the morning or evening to connecting with social media. There is no right or wrong amount of time, but it is important that social media doesn’t *prevent* you from doing other things you

want to do, like self-care, spending time outdoors, or engaging with friends and community. Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself about your time spent on social media:

- *Am I checking social media to avoid doing important tasks?*
- *Am I disappointed when I realize how much time I've spent scrolling?*
- *Am I staying up later than I'd like because I'm using social media?*

If you answer yes to any of those questions, you may benefit from setting limits or schedules for yourself. You may choose to turn your phone off for certain times or activities, or to avoid having your phone near your bed. There are also apps to help you track your screen time and activities. *(See more tips and resources at the end of this article.)*

What purpose does it serve?

Social media can be a valuable tool to keep you connected to loved ones, friends, and the world. You can use social media to support causes, raise awareness, and engage in activism. You might use social media to find friends, community, or emotional support. You may find creative inspiration or a platform to share your own creative work. Of course, these are just a few of the positive and productive ways to engage with social media. Take a moment to reflect on your social media usage and ask yourself:



- *What do I enjoy about social media?*
- *How do I connect and interact with others via social media?*
- *Do I experience self-doubt or insecurity after seeing what others post?*
- *How does social media benefit my making practices or support my professional goals?*

Some researchers theorize that the impact of social media on mental health depends on how you engage with social media, distinguishing between **active** use (active communication with peers or connecting with community) and **passive** use (scrolling through posts without engaging/communicating.) While active use can help us feel more connected and engaged with others, passive use can increase feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, or fear of missing out. So, next time you're scrolling, think about your level of engagement and activity.

(image credit: Vecteezy)

Social Media for Artists and Makers

Many artists and makers use social media to share their work, develop their brand, reach new audiences, or market themselves professionally. Social media can be a source of inspiration, connection, and a valuable professional tool.

If you're interested in using social media for creative and professional purposes, it may be helpful to talk with others in your field about their experiences and how they utilize social media.

Many, many artists and researchers have shared their thoughts and opinions about art and social media. If you're interested in exploring this topic further, here are a few perspectives to check out:

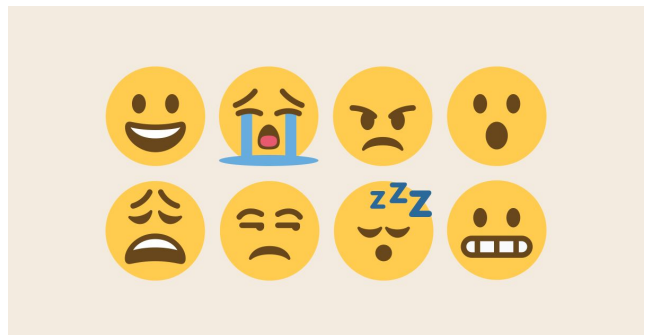
[NPR - Instagram in Reshaping how we Interact with Art \(2019\)](#)

[Artsy - 4 Artists Share Tips on Using Instagram to Grow Your Art Practice](#)

[Downtown 500 Magazine - According to Artists...](#)

How does it make you feel?

This is probably the most important question to ask yourself. Take some time to reflect on your feelings about using social media, and about your level of social media use. Notice the thoughts and emotions that come up for you while you're scrolling. Notice whether you feel that you have control over your social media use. (image credit: ESL Library)



Focus on what feels healthy for YOU.

If you find that you're experiencing feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, or fear of missing out (FOMO) after using social media, you're not alone. It might be helpful to make some changes to the way you interact with social media. Here are some tips from the National Alliance on Mental Illness ([NAMI](#)) to help you engage in a healthy way:

- Unfollow unhealthy accounts - Unfollow, block, or delete accounts that don't add positivity, motivation, or inspiration to your life.

- Support and connect with others - Be selective about who you connect and engage with on social media. Choose interactions that are reciprocal and fulfilling.
- Take note of what YOU share - Think about whether content you share is helpful or harmful to yourself and others. Consider your sources and publications, and your motivation for sharing.

If you need help setting boundaries...

If you're having trouble regulating your social media use, there are tricks and tools designed to help reduce your screen time:

- One easy strategy is to turn off notifications that you don't need. Allow yourself specific times to catch up with social media, but don't allow it to interrupt other activities.
- Track your daily or weekly screen time and set realistic goals for yourself.
- Delete apps from your phone, and only check them when you use a laptop or desktop.
- Avoid keeping your phone or tablet near your bed. (You may have to get an alarm clock.)
- Try screen-free meals, or dedicate a specific screen-free area of your living space.
- Set time limits for specific apps, and use your phone's timer. If you're using an iPhone or other Apple device, you can set limits for yourself with [Screen Time](#).
- Try an app to regulate your app usage. Examples include [OFFTIME](#) and [Freedom](#).

Additional Support

If you feel like you would benefit from talking to someone about your social media use, or any emotional challenges related to this topic, CCA counselors are here for you. Counselors can also provide referrals to outside services and providers as needed. To access CCA Counseling Services, click [here](#).

Resources:

[HelpGuide.Org - Social Media and Mental Health](#)

[NCBI - Technology and College Students](#)

[Architectural Digest - Reducing Screen Time](#)

[NAMI - How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media](#)