

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

CHARACTERISTICS, CAUSES & A CURE



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Introduction

Teenage social media addiction can be described as preoccupation and obsession. A teenager with a social media addiction has become so engrossed in the virtual world that it has impacted the real world, causing harmful effects. While many teens engage in social media through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vine, Snapchat, and others, teens who are addicted to social media see a negative impact on their real life relationships and responsibilities.

Dominant Characteristics of Social Media Addiction in Teens

[Paradigm Malibu](#) explains that social media addiction most often entails two distinct characteristics of addiction: the extensive amount of time spent on social media and the underlying reasons why they're engaged online.

A teen with a social media addiction has an overwhelming desire to participate in the virtual world. The teen will feel internal pressure to check their updates, add new statuses, post a photo, or engage in other online activity. A teen addicted to social media will prefer the virtual connections and relationships to those in real life. As the teenage years are a pivotal time for social growth in teens, this desire can be harmful as the teen may not develop healthy or appropriate social skills.

Another common characteristic of teens addicted to social media is the desire to create an attractive and “likable” virtual view of their life. A teen may spend more time taking photos of their ‘fun activity’ than they actually spend participating in and enjoying it. A teen may become so consumed with taking photos of themselves on the beach, at a concert, etc. that they actually miss enjoying the beach or concert.

While the teenage experience is full of pressures and stresses about being ‘good enough’ it is even more so for a teen with a social media addiction. The constant pressure to gain ‘likes’ and comments hinders their ability to find their true identity in an authentic way.

Statistics on Teen Social Media Addiction

[Newport Academy](#) cites a variety of statistics regarding teenage social media addiction:

- 92% of Teenagers Go Online Everyday
- 24% of Teens Are Online ‘Almost Constantly’
- 76% of Teens Engage in Social Media – 71% are on Facebook, 52% on Instagram, 41% on Snapchat, 33% use Twitter and 14% are on Tumblr
- 77% of Parents Say Their Teens Are Distracted by Devices When They Are Together
- 59% of Parents Believe Their Teens Are Addicted to Their Mobile Devices
- 50% of Teens Believe They Are Addicted to Their Mobile Device

Causes of Teenage Social Media Addiction

Teenagers can become addicted to social media for a number of reasons. [Mom Junction](#) cites a list of reasons that a teen may become addicted.

A Teen May feel:

- Overwhelmed
- Lonely
- Bored
- [Stressed](#)
- [Depressed](#)
- [Anxious](#)
- Disconnected
- Shy

The virtual world may act as an escape from the problems of the world. This activity will set a precedent for the next time an uncomfortable or negative feeling creeps into the teen's life. A teen may feel disconnected from friends or families. They may feel as though they don't belong. This may lead a teen to build their virtual world where they feel safe, accepted and loved.

A teen who is shy is prone to social media addiction. Struggling with real life relationships, teens can be confident behind the keyboard, making new friends and expressing themselves more openly.

Is Social Media Addiction the Sign of a Disorder?

According to Newport Academy, kids who feel isolated or unhappy are at a particular risk for social media addictions. When paired with these negative feeling and emotions, other disorders can emerge or be more easily recognized. Social media addiction may amplify the symptoms of [ADHD](#), [teen depression](#), [oppositional defiant disorder](#), and [teen anxiety](#). Social media addiction is a never ending spiral. More is always required to satisfy the addiction.

How Social Media Addiction Affects the Adolescent Brain

Social media addictions can affect the chemical processes of the brain. Studies have found that when a teen receives a 'like' on social media, the same circuits of the brain are activated that would be if the teen had won money or eaten chocolate.

The rush of dopamine to the brain as a result of positive feedback creates a type of high. This begins a cycle of desire for the teen to recreate that positive feeling. More posting, checking and watching are a result.

Studies suggest that teens with social media addictions are more likely to develop other addictions. As the brain desires more and more positive 'highs', social media and reactions from the virtual world are not always able to readily deliver. Teens may then turn to [drugs](#), [alcohol](#), and other drugs to create the same sensation.

How Does Social Media Addiction Affect Teens?

Social media addiction not only directly affects a teen's brain processes and chemicals, but other areas of life. A study found that the more teens used Facebook the more their overall satisfaction with life declined.

Studies suggest that when a teen focuses solely on themselves and showing off their 'best self' they actually reduce self-esteem. Facebook and other social media activity has led to symptoms of both low self-esteem and narcissism.

Teens tend to compare themselves to others online. This is particularly dangerous as it not only lowers self-esteem but can also lead to depression, [eating disorders](#), [self-harming behaviors](#) and [substance abuse](#).

Social media prohibits a teen to be fully absorbed in an activity. Referred to as flow state, the brain is constantly interrupted from a flow of rest and relaxation with social media posts and updates. This restricts and inhabits the teens' ability to fully rest and relax in their activity.

Treatment for Social Media Addiction in Teens

With many teens in America owning a cellular device, many parents are finding limiting and controlling social media use nearly impossible. Talking openly with your teen, setting limits and boundaries, and developing a social schedule are all ways parents can encourage their teens to live a healthy and balanced life.

For some teens, the social media addiction has already begun to affect other parts of their lives. Teens who are depressed, anxious, or exhibit other behavioral symptoms along with social media addiction may be candidates for more extreme measures.

Shepherds Hill Academy offers a unique solution to combating social media addiction. A Christ-based therapeutic boarding school, Shepherds Hill Academy boasts a proven [wilderness component](#) to offer healing to teens with social media addictions. The 12-month program at SHA is a wakeup call to teens who are living solely in a virtual world. The program includes a rustic living environment, free of modern conveniences, peer pressure, and most importantly, mobile devices.

Teens participating in the program at Shepherds Hill Academy will focus on developing healthy habits and behavior in order to live a productive and successful life. Through [individual counseling](#), group therapy, [equine therapy](#), and a fully [accredited educational environment](#), teens are given some of the best resources available. A strict 5 to 1 student to staff ratio ensures your child is safe, mentored, and meeting their personal goals.

Is your teen addicted to social media? Are they engaging in harmful behavior or having trouble living life in the real world? Learn how Shepherds Hill Academy may be a great fit for your teen! [Inquire online](#) or call us today.

Additional Resources:

- Newport Academy Staff, March 27, 2017, Looking for ‘Likes’: Teens and Social Media Addiction, Retrieved from:
<https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/teens-social-media-addiction/>
- Raja, Debolina, March 21, 2017, Teenage Social Media Addiction and It’s Effects, Retrieved from:
http://www.momjunction.com/articles/teenage-addiction-to-social-media_00353048/#gref
- Teen Social Media Addiction Treatment, Paradigm Malibu. Retrieved from:
<https://paradigmmalibu.com/teen-social-media-addiction-treatment/>