**GCCHM Leadership Certification**

**Level X, Course #3**

**DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CAUSE DEPRESSION?**

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**(Presenter’s Notes)**

**Introduction**

Is using social media making our kids unhappy? Evidence is mounting that there is a link between social media and depression.

**Correlation Between Smartphone and Depression: 2017 San Diego Study by Jean Twenge**

* 2010 – 13%l of 8th-12th graders reported depression
* 2015 – 66% of 8th-12th graders reported depression
* 2010-2015 – Suicide rates for girls incread by 65%
* 2010-2015 – visits to counseling centers jumped by 30%
* 2007 Smartphones was introduced – 2015: 92% of teens have phones

**Social Media and Depression**

* “The less you are connected with human beings in a deep, empathic way, the less you’re really getting the benefits of a social interaction,” points out Alexandra Hamlet, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. “The more superficial it is, the less likely it’s going to cause you to feel connected, which is something we all need.”

**Social Media and Perceived Isolation**

* Jerry Bubrick, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, observes that “FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is really the fear of not being connected to our social world, and that need to feel connected sometimes trumps whatever’s going on in the actual situation we’re in. The more we use social media, the less we think about being present in the moment.”

**Background/Illustration**

Another study last year of a national sample of young adults (age 19-32) showed correlation between the time spent on social media and perceived social isolation (PSI). The authors noted that directionality can’t be determined. That is, “Do people feeling socially isolated spend more time on social media, or do more intense users develop PSI?”

If it’s the latter, they noted, “Is it because the individual is spending less time on more authentic social experiences that would decrease PSI? Or is it the nature of observing highly curated social feeds that they make you feel more excluded?” Which brings us what we now call FOMO, or fear of missing out.

**What Is FOMO? “Fear of Missing Out”**

* Worrying why we weren’t invited to a party we’re seeing on Instagram.
* Making sure we don’t miss a single post from a friend.
* Catching up to endless online updates.

Instead we might be occupied with worrying why we weren’t invited to a party we’re seeing on Instagram or making sure we don’t miss a single post from a friend. But if we’re always playing catch-up to endless online updates, we’re prioritizing social interactions that aren’t as emotionally rewarding and can actually make us feel more isolated.

**Social Media and Self-esteem**

* Another theory about the increase in depression is the loss of self-esteem, especially in teenage girls, when they compare themselves negatively with artfully curated images of those who appear to be prettier, thinner, more popular and richer.
* “Kids spend so much time on social media trying to post what they think the world will think is a perfect life.
* Look at how happy I am! Look how beautiful I am! Without that they’re worried that their friends won’t accept them. They’re afraid of being rejected.
* And if they are getting positive feedback from their social media accounts, they might worry that what their friends like isn’t the “real” them.
* Curation of a perfect image may not only make others feel inadequate, it’s unhealthy even for those who appear to be successful at it.

**Background/Illustration**

“Many girls are bombarded with their friends posting the most perfect pictures of themselves, or they’re following celebrities and influencers who do a lot of Photo shopping and have makeup and hair teams,” explains Dr. Hamlet. “If that’s their model for what is normal, it can be very hard on their self- confidence.”

Curation of a perfect image may not only make others feel inadequate, it’s unhealthy even for those who appear to be successful at it, notes Dr. Bubrick.

**Less Healthy Activity**

* Another possible source of depression may be what teenagers are not doing during while they’re spending time on social media, including physical activity and things that generate a sense of accomplishment, like learning new skills and developing talents.

**Illustration/Background**

“If you’re spending a lot of time on your phone, you have less time for activities that can build confidence, a sense of achievement and connectedness,” explains Dr. Hamlet.

Kids who are spending a lot of time on devices are not getting much in return to make them feel good about themselves, she adds. “Yes, you get a little dopamine burst whenever you get a notification, or a like on a picture, or a follow request. But those things are addicting without being satisfying.”

**Disrupted Concentration**

* Another thing disrupted by social media is the process of doing homework and other tasks that require concentration.
* It’s become common for teenagers to engage with friends on social media at the same time they are studying.
* They take pride in being able to multi-task, but evidence shows that it cuts down on learning and performance.

“Basically, multitasking isn’t possible,” Dr. Hamlet notes. “What you end up doing is really just switching back and forth between two tasks rather quickly. There is a cost to the brain.” And with poorer concentration and constant interruption, homework takes substantially longer than it should, cutting into free time and adding to stress.

**Sleep Deprivation and Depression**

* Research shows that 60 percent of adolescents are looking at their phones in the last hour before sleep, and that they get on average an hour less sleep than their peers who don’t use their phones before bed.
* Blue light from electronic screens interferes with falling asleep; on top of that, checking social media is not necessarily a relaxing or sleep-inducing activity.
* Scrolling on social media, notes Dr. Hamlet, can easily end up causing stress.

**University of Pennsylvania Research: Psychologist Melissa G. Hunt published her findings in the December 2018 *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology***

* 143 participants completed a survey to determine mood and well-being at the study's start.
* They shared shots of their iPhone battery screens to offer a week's worth of baseline social-media data.
* Hunt then looked at seven outcome measures including fear of missing out, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

**Research Results**

* Using less social media leads to significant decreases in both depression and loneliness.
* When you're not busy getting sucked into social media, you're actually spending more time on things that are more likely to make you feel better about your life.
* "In general, put your phone down and be with the people in your life."

**How to Minimize Negative Effects of Social Media Use?**

**1. Focus on Balance:**

* + Make sure your kids are also engaging in social interaction online and have time for activities that help build identity and self-confidence.

**2. Turn Off Notifications:**

* + App developers are getting more and more aggressive with notifications to lure users to interrupt whatever they’re doing to engage constantly with their phones. Don’t let them.

**3. Look Out for Girls At Higher Risk Of Depression:**

* + Monitor girls who are going through a particularly tough time or are under unusual stress.
	+ Negative effects of social media can have more impact when confidence is down.

**4. Teach Mindful Use of Social Media:**

* + Encourage teenagers to be honest with themselves about how time spent on social media makes them feel and disengage from interactions that increase stress or unhappiness.

**5. Model Restraint and Balance In Your Own Media Diet:**

* Set an example by disengaging from media to spend quality family time together, including phone-free dinners and other activities.
* Kids may resist, but they’ll feel the benefits.

**6. Phone-free Time Before Sleep:**

* Enforce a policy of no smartphones in the bedroom after a specific time and overnight. Use an old-fashioned alarm clock to wake up.

**References**

* <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/11/181108164316.htm>
* <https://childmind.org/article/is-social-media-use-causing-depression/>