

Social Media: What It's Good For and What It's Good At

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Social media is no doubt an important resource for individuals in our world today, as it enables simple, intuitive connection between people. But a closer look at the other, lesser-known things that social media enables was all it took for me to make the decision to avoid using social media on a day-to-day basis. I noticed that any time I was bored or faced with a task that I didn't want to complete, I would pull out my phone and scroll through Instagram or TikTok. This was a daily occurrence, multiple times per day, I would choose to use social media rather than do what I needed to do. The height of this came during COVID, as there really was not much else to do, and honestly social media was an extremely beneficial thing for the world during COVID because it allowed people to connect virtually while physical connection was severely limited. But now, we are again allowed to stand within six feet of one another and people still choose to scroll their day away. It wasn't until November 2023 that I decided to delete social media apps from my phone, and so far I believe that my life has improved drastically by not doomscrolling, fretting over 'what I should post', and not feeling the many other side effects produced by social media.

Recently, I discovered that one of my neighbors in my hometown had been starving herself and was facing depression, to the point where she had to be hospitalized. As a 13 year old girl, she had a 'hidden' TikTok account where she would post videos of stick-figure models with captions of how she wishes she could be 'normal', meaning that she thought these models were considered normal. The saddest part of the situation was the realization that it itself was 'normal'. Social media not only has the potential to cause harm, but it does indeed cause harm and people continue to use it and continue to allow their children to use it.

According to prioridata, the average individual today spends around 6 hours and 45 minutes daily on their screens. It is no secret that social media companies have a very important goal of keeping users on their platforms for as long as possible, and that does not seem to be a coincidence compared to the consistent increase in screen time. It seems to me that the social media companies are succeeding in their goals, and that users are not concerned that they are having more interactions online than they are in person.

With all of this in mind, it would be hard to ignore the topic of conspiracy. Many people do not agree or believe that social media can cause harm, and no one can fault them for that. It is not up to me to tell people to delete social media or to not delete social media. I believe that you should do what you want to do with your life, and if you don't believe that social media is a burden then there should be no reason to abstain from using it. What I will say is that you are not likely to find a reason to delete social media unless you search for one, which is exactly what I did. For the longest time I felt as though social media was good for me, as it allowed me to constantly see what my friends were up to and vice versa, but then I started to wonder why. Why do I always want to know what my friends are doing, and why do I want them to know what I am doing? My answer turned out to be "I don't", and this sparked my research into the subject. I

realized I don't want to see the vast majority of what social media has come to offer such as extremely frequent advertisements, edited photos of people always having a smile on their face. I started to see social media as fake, almost like a game. Looking through people's profiles I noticed that it was all the good parts of life: travelling, love, experiences. I am certainly not implying that I like sadness, but I am implying that I like reality, I like the things that make us who we are and those things are not always happy, but they are on social media. And so, I decided to step away from it all, to see the world in a potentially new way, and I think that I made a smart decision for myself. I think it gave me a new perspective on time by giving me so much more of it. So for me, the biggest, most important impact that social media has had on my life is showing me what life is like without it.

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