Has social media taken over your life? If you aren’t sure, how does the story below sound like you?

The morning alarm rings and you wake up groggy-eyed. You reach out to your phone from under the pillow and hit the snooze button. A few minutes later, when the alarm sounds again, you pick up the phone. This time you decide to check your phone. You start with Whatsapp, continue with Instagram and end with Facebook.

You decide to go back to sleep until the alarm sounds again. You carry your phone with you to the washroom because social media serves as the best way to kill time in the bathroom. Once you finish, you get ready and head to work. If you’re driving, good for you because you cannot check your phone while driving.

Even at work, you open the social media apps which crave your attention every now and then. **Every 30 minutes or so, you unlock your phone and find out what your friends are up to.**

“Oh, he went on a vacation. Oh wow, this guy worked out hard and got a six-pack. The dish on that picture looks delicious.”

**If you do the same regularly, you have a social media addiction.**

All the social media apps are designed to garner for your attention time and again. In technical terms, these websites have a “hook” which leads to a happy feeling.

For example, Instagram creates a hook by showing who has checked the story you posted. Without those details, you would post a story and forget about it. But the hook of knowing who checked your status pulls you back into the app

As a result, you spend more time on the app. The more time you spend on the app, the more money it makes.

The hook pulls you back into the app by providing you a [dopamine rush](https://productiveclub.com/dopamine-brain-get-things-done/). Dopamine, also called as the pleasure chemical, generates a feel-good factor when you perform certain activities. For example, eating, drinking alcohol, smoking, gambling and the buzz of your cellphone, trigger dopamine within your body.

But dopamine isn’t always bad. It is the same chemical that makes you pump your fists when you complete a task or achieve a goal. In short, most addictions, both good and bad arise due to dopamine.

Checking social media to know who liked your post or who commented on your picture releases dopamine too. So do not curse yourself too much.

You might assume that the only damage from social media is wasted time. But there are many more indirect consequences of checking those addictive apps that you need to know about.

**1. Comparing the boring parts of your life vs your friend’s best**

A person's face on a poster

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You never post a picture from a boring day at work, do you? But as soon as you place a toe in a fancy restaurant, out comes the phone to capture a boomerang of the beer fizz.

Just like you post only the best part of your life on social media, so do the others. But when you look at the posts where your friend enjoys a tequila shot or swims in the clear waters of Greece, you feel miserable about yourself. **Little do you know that all those people showcasing a fancy life have a boring side of their own like you.**

**But when you make a comparison, you compare the best things on social media vs the most boring part of your day to day life.**

In reality, you go out on trips as frequently as the others do but you compare your friend with a bottle of champagne vs you banging on your keyboard. Not quite a fair comparison I would say.

If you minimize your usage of social media, you relieve yourself from the [stress of unnecessary comparisons](https://productiveclub.com/stop-comparing-yourself-to-others/).

**2. The need to maintain an image**



Do you know how does social media affect self esteem? Due to the social status associated with the pictures and posts, you feel the need to maintain a good image. When you have to go out for dinner, you dress up well not only to look good in real life but also appear beautiful in your social media pictures and stories.

**People dressing up more for Instagram than real life is not uncommon any more.** Many people even feel the need to purchase a good phone to capture images of high quality. Some people go to the extent of visiting an expensive place just to flaunt their status to the rest of the world.

**3. The addiction of instant gratification**

A picture containing calendar

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When you post a picture, you get hundreds or thousands of likes. When you have a story to share, a ton of people are waiting to view it. But unfortunately, the same does not replicate in real life. You might wear the best dress in your wardrobe and do the most interesting activity in the world, but you do not garner the same attention as in the online world.

**Over time, you fade into the virtual world where your sense of satisfaction comes from Instagram, Facebook, and Whatsapp than in real life.** It gives you a false sense of importance which you fail to get otherwise. As human beings, we want what we cannot get. As a result, you head back to social media for more gratification.

It turns into an endless vicious circle you cannot get out of.

**4. Real-life vs virtual life**

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Have you seen the dude who looks so cool on Facebook but can hardly hold a conversation in real life? We all have. This is because **the communication in the world of the internet differs from how the real world works**.

For example, people fighting over comments is common. Even known people fight like they have declared war on each other. It happens on topics related to sports, politics, feminism, religion, and whatnot. Those who indulge in such arguments and debates have rightly been termed as “keyboard warriors”.

Abusing and brawling over the internet is easy. Moreover, you also get enough time to think and draft your response. Try having a similar fight in real life. Most of those brave internet soldiers chicken out.

**Due to the difference in the style of interactions in the online world, many people build a different online persona compared to reality.**

### 5. You start with one and continue with many more

### A picture containing text, vector graphics Description automatically generated

How many of you have decided to watch one particular Youtube video and found yourself watching an unrelated video an hour later? I don’t know about you, but I sure have.

**Youtube not only knows your taste but also your preference by the time of the day and the day of the week. Youtube has mastered the art of keeping your attention by watching one video after another until you run out of energy or the laptop runs out of battery.**

**6. Impacts your sleep**

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Your phone emits blue light which prevents the secretion of melatonin in your body. Melatonin signals your body to go to sleep. But nowadays, you might have a habit of checking your phone to glance through all your social media apps before going to bed.

**7. Envy and jealousy in relationships**

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Posting pictures on social media can lead to unnecessary misunderstandings in relationships. The wife goes out for dinner and the husband spots a picture of her which gets his mind thinking. Sometimes the problems arise due to insecurity of the person but more often it is pure confusion.

Social media can introduce jealousy between friends too. When one friend posts a picture in an expensive restaurant or from an exotic holiday spot, others grow envious of his lifestyle.

**Though such envy may not always create a rift in a relationship or friendship, certain unsaid things linger in the mind.**

**8. Stalking and being ignored leading to insecurity**

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Some apps like Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram have created a hook by showing if the recipient read your message. Whatsapp displays when was the person last online or if the user is currently online.

Due to the hook, people feel the need to know if the other user read the message. When your crush does not reply back after reading the message, you feel ignored. A feeling of insecurity pops up. **It could be that the person was too busy to reply but your mind always thinks your crush gave you a cold shoulder.**

**9. Lower mood levels**

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[A study in 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563214001241) proved a causal relationship between Facebook and negative moods. In a series of studies, various ill-effects of the social media platform came to light.

One study showed that the longer people used Facebook, the more negative their mood turns into. To make it worse, the feeling of having wasted time without doing anything meaningful adds more negativity to your mood.

Checking your social media gives you a false impression of relaxation. But it hampers your mood and puts you in a negative mindset.

**10. Decision Fatigue**

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Is social media your way of taking a break from the stress? Little do you know that browsing your social media feeds adds to your exhaustion. Do you remember how tired your head feels when you have to make a lot of decisions?

For example, when you plan a vacation, you must pick hotels to stay in and places to visit. At the end of bookings, the activity takes a toll on you because you made many decisions, which need energy.

When you use social media, you make small decisions one after another. Should I click on this post? Is this picture worth a like? What can I comment on this picture?

**Each of these decisions tires your mind. Browsing newsfeed during your break isn’t really helping you rest but adding to your fatigue.**

## Conclusion

Social media does have its benefits. It brings your friend staying miles away within the reach of your cellphone. Not only can you keep in touch with your loved ones, but you also know what they are up to in life.

However, social media provides a medium for people to provide way more details than necessary. You know a friend who posts stories of every aspect of their daily life. Or maybe you are that person.

Such detailed information only does more harm than good. It is good to know where your acquaintances are off late but you do not need to know where they are dining tonight.

**The takeaway here is not that you should quit social media today. But you need to identify if those apps are working in your favor or sabotaging your happiness.**

Social media is only a platform. What you use it for and how often you use it is your choice. **You can choose to spend hours on them each day or use it sparingly. The choice is yours.**