Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Robin Basselin. And I’m Ryan Geerstma. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Every day, more than one billion people connect with each other using social media. People post pictures on websites like Facebook. They like and share videos that they have watched on YouTube. And they send messages to friends using programs like QQ Messenger. In just the last 10 years, social media has completely changed the way we communicate. And it has let us communicate with people around the world. But how does using social media affect us? Scientists from many different countries have studied this question. They have looked particularly at its effects on human emotions and relationships. Some studies show that using social media can cause depression. And other studies suggest that is can negatively affect our relationships. Today's Spotlight is on the positive and negative effects of social media. The main positive effect of social media is also its purpose: connection. Modern life can be very busy. Many people work long hours. Other people live far away from family and friends in different cities or countries. Today, many things separate people. And it can be difficult to stay connected with the people that are important to us. Zeynep Tufekci is a scientist who studies social media and human behavior. In The Atlantic magazine, she wrote, Voice 3 “Social media's very fast rise is a loud and growing attempt by people everywhere to connect with each other. They are connecting even with all the barriers that the modern world forces on our lives.” Social media can also help people make new friends. Often, these are friends they would not have met without social media. For example, imagine you have a very particular interest. You love the science of soil! Usually, you would not meet very many people who are also interested in soil. But through social media, you can find people all over the world who share your interest in soil science. Social media can also help people spread news about major world events. This lets people all over the world react more quickly and even help. For example, in January of 2010, the small country of Haiti experienced a major earthquake. More than 100,000 people died. Millions more people needed food and shelter. Soon after the earthquake, the International Red Cross started an appeal for aid on social media. Very quickly, they raised many millions of dollars to help the earthquake victims. Wendy Harman, the Red Cross social media manager, told Mashable: Voice 4 "The result was huge. I am sure that it would not have spread so widely without social media." It is clear that social media has many positive effects. But some scientists warn that social media can also harm people. The Public Library of Science published a major study in 2013. This study looked at people from the United States who used the social media website Facebook. The study found that the more these individuals used Facebook, the less they were satisfied with their life. And scientists observed that this could cause feelings of depression. Another major study in Germany found similar results. Scientist studies how 600 German Facebook users felt while they used Facebook. They found that the most common emotion people experienced while using Facebook was envy. So, why would using Facebook cause depression and envy? Well, often, when people put things on social media, they only post the best things about their lives. They talk about the fun things they are doing. Or they post pictures that make them look particularly good. So, when people look at Facebook, they are only seeing the best things in their friends' lives. This can make them feel less satisfied about their own lives. And, they can begin to feel envy because their friends' lives look so perfect. Researchers also noted that Facebook relationships are different than normal relationships. When someone sees a friend regularly, they see both the good and bad in that person’s life. But if someone only see a friend on social media, they will probably only see part of their friend’s life. This makes social media relationships very different than normal relationships. Sherry Turkle is a technology expert that teaches at MIT in the United States. Turkle claims that social media is decreasing the quality of our relationships. When people use social media, they do not talk deeply or for very long. And being someone’s Facebook friends demands very little effort. Turkle wrote about social media relationships in the New York Times. She said, Voice 5 "We expect more from technology and less from one another. More and more, we desire technologies that provide a false idea of relationship without the demands of relationship." Many people have begun to notice the negative effects of social media themselves. Ashleigh Elser is a young woman from the United States. In 2011, she began to notice that Facebook was affecting her relationships. She told the New York Times, Voice 6 "I was not calling my friends any more. I was just seeing their pictures and comments on Facebook and I felt like that was really connecting to them." But Elser began to recognize that she was not truly connecting with her friends. So, she decided to stop using Facebook. She knew she would miss some things. But she felt that stopping Facebook would improve her relationships with her closest friends. Sam Laird is a writer for the internet company Mashable. Like Elser, he also decided to stop using Facebook. For him, it was experiment. He wanted to see what would happen. After 5 months, he found that he concentrated more on his life and relationships. However, he also found that he missed shared memories and fun events on Facebook. Laird enjoyed being off Facebook. But he said he would probably return to Facebook one day. He wrote, Voice 7 "My experiment has shown me that social media has become a part of human life. You can use it or not use it as much as you like, but it is not going anywhere." Laird is probably right. Social media is not going anywhere. But we may need to think more carefully about how we use it and how it makes us feel. So, how do you feel when you use social media? Do you think it improves or hurts your relationships? Would you ever consider stopping using social media? Tell us what you think. You can leave your comments on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. The writer of this program was Jen Hawkins. The producer was Mark Drenth. The voices you heard were from the United States. All quotes were adapted and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, “The Good and Bad of Social Media." We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye!