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## SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Humans are social beings gregarious in nature. We need the companionship of others to prosper, and the intensity of our bonds has a profound effect on our mental wellbeing and happiness. Being socially associated with others relieves tension, panic attacks and depressive symptoms, improves self-worth, provides peace and comfort, avoids isolation, and even add longevity to our lives. On the other hand lack of good social ties can pose a significant risk to mental and emotional health.

In present era, most of us rely on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram to connect and communicate with one another. It has significantly changed the way we connect and interact. Although each platform has its own advantages, it is important to note that social media can never be a substitute for real-world human interactions. After attack of COVID 19 people who were forced to live in quarantine, away from their loved ones, tried to keep in touch through social media but it was a challenge for them to maintain their mental and emotional health. It needs in-person communication with others to activate hormones that reduce stress and make you feel happy, stronger and more optimistic. Ironically, using technology intended to bring people closer together but spending too much time on social media can potentially make you feel more depressed and lonely. The more time we devote to social media the less time we have for face to face real life socializing which puts our relationships at high risk. This worsens mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Social networking sites are built to attract your interest, hold you online, and keep you up-to-date on your phone frequently. That's how the businesses make the profits. But, like gambling obsession or dependency to tobacco, liquor, or narcotics, social media use may trigger psychological hunger pangs. If you receive a like, a positive response to a tweet, it can cause the release of dopamine in the brain, the same "reward" chemical that accompanies winning on a slot machine, a bite of chocolate, or smoking, for example. The more rewarded you are, the more energy you want to spend on social media, even though it is counterproductive to other areas of your life. The physical inactivity and lack of exercise leads to health hazards in the long run.

Some studies indicate that excessive use of social media has an interdependent relationship with reduced sleep quality in young people. It seems that younger folks love being actively linked to the virtual environment that they develop a fear of missing out (FOMO). It can keep you to come back to social media again and again. Even though there are very few issues that can't wait or necessitate an immediate answer, FOMO will have you believe otherwise. Many of us use social media as a "protective shield" as well. Whenever we're in a social situation and feel nervous, uneasy, or lonely, we turn to our phones and log on to social media. Of course, engaging with social media just prevents you a face-to-face contact that will help to relieve your anxiety.

Social networking has also been related to questions regarding body image. Research reveals that when young girls and women in their teens and early twenties view Facebook for a brief amount of time, their body image issues are higher than those of non-users. Young people see pictures of "ideal" models and start making associations with their own bodies. This can lead to low body-esteem, especially if young people feel that their own bodies do not look good compared with the "perfect" and chiseled bodies they see digitally. Young people are highly influenced by famous people and may want to look like them. If they believe this is unattainable, it may lead to depression, body-monitoring, and low body-confidence. Young people will then begin to experience problems such as anorexia nervosa. The problem of physical appearance is not just a feminine issue. Young males are also insecure and affected by the muscular, well-toned bodies they see online.

There are beneficial aspects of social media as well like building and facilitating supportive relationships, promoting a sense of belonging and enhancing self esteem. It introduces the youth to new and vibrant ideas and also teaches them to seek help online. It has benefited the generation Z in a variety of ways, but it still overpowers the good aspects and is profoundly detrimental to our mental health. A number of studies have found a substantial link between heavy social media usage and an increased risk of low self esteem, loneliness, envy and depression. They fail to understand that the life they view on social media is highly manipulated. People share only the rosy highlights of their lives not their low side that everyone experiences. Taking and sharing innumerable selfies on social media leads to unhealthy self-centeredness driving one away from healthy real life connections and heart-warming friendships. Cyber bullying is also reported in many cases. Accessibility of media round the clock, consistent alert and notifications affect concentration and focus which in turn may lead to sleep disorders. There is an urgent need for regular get-togethers with friends and family. It is a compelling need to look into the matter before our lives are fully overtaken by the virtual community.