

Does your Teen suffer from Social Media Overload?

It's no great secret that teens compare themselves to their peers to try to gain a sense of identity and it's time that parents face the cold hard facts.

Today's world is much different than the one we grew up in.

When we were kids we didn't have things like Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and a whole laundry list of other social media outlets, and the advent of these 24-7 interactions has been a game changer. For teens, tweens and everything in between, social media identity has become as important as, if not *more* important than "real world" identity.

Sound confusing? It kind of is.

Today's version of "popularity" is all tied into whose Twitter posts are getting the most re-tweets and whose Instagram photos are getting the most likes. But there is also another facet to all this. Namely, the sense of anxiety, isolation and even depression that comes from teens seeing all their friends post all these fabulous posts that they're not a part of. #LeftOut

Or, let's use another example. Let's say your teenager invited friends to hang out one afternoon but their friends said they were busy. An hour later, when these friends start posting pics of themselves having the #MostEpicAfternoonEVER, your kid realizes they were deliberately left out. #Rejected.

Like it or not all this social media stuff stirs up plenty of emotions at a time your kids, based on simple biology are already emotional. #Hormones

Too much social media can be a bad thing

The thing about all these online personas is that they're often not real. All those photos that Kim Kardashian posts on her Instagram page? Rumor has it they're fake. In February of this year OK Magazine broke a story about how Ms. Kanye West *allegedly* pays an assistant \$100,000 a year to Photoshop all her photos before they're posted online.

Kim of course denied the whole thing, but you get the gist.

The pressure to create an online identity who goes to the best parties, has the most fun and hangs out with the #BestFriendsEver is real.

The emotions that come when a teen sees all of their friends out on some adventure that they weren't included in can often have them feeling as if they're alone in the crowd. Sure, they see all these people at school, but not being included in outside-of-school activities and then being bombarded by photos and videos can really kick someone right square in the self-esteem.

Why don't they want to hang with me? Why wasn't I included? Does everyone always have this much fun without me? Why isn't my life that cool?

The emotions are real

All these negative emotions that are associated with not being included or worse—feelings of being left out are real. The negative emotions that are a result of being teased, embarrassed by or bullied due to

some photo that appears on some social media website are real. They're not something they can "brush off" or "just forget about."

With the Internet—these sometimes horrible emotional memories can stick around "in their face" for years. Why? Because social media posts can last forever. (Yes, this is even true for Snapchat. It's not that hard to permanently capture a photo that was only meant to hang out for a couple seconds before fading into oblivion.)

What to look for as a parent

Is there such a thing as a social media overload warning sign? Yes, but they're not that easy to spot.

These could span everything from mood swings, being short and snippy or even locking themselves in their room and not wanting to interact with the family. Other symptoms could include falling grades, not wanting to go out with friends as often and extreme mood swings.

The problem is that these are also all warning signs that you have a typical teenager.

The bottom line is this: if your teen's social media use is starting to have a negative impact on their daily life, it may be time for a break. It may also be a sign that you should seek outside help.

Therapy is a great way to help a person find their self-worth and realize their own uniqueness. Teens need to understand that what they see online and in the media is often not real or normal, and that who they are as a person is quite special all on its own.

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