

GIZMOS AND HUMANS

We humans are fickle. We are consistently over-confident about what we are capable of doing, except, of course, when we are justifying our deflection of ownership or initiative. We blame outside circumstances when we fail, and claim prowess and skill when we succeed. We LOVE to think that, where media is concerned, we are strong and we can “take it or leave it alone.”

With the enormous and rapid rise in emotional, physical and existential suffering caused by anxiety, fear, depression and loss of meaning and care, however, many of us turn to social media for distraction, diversion, old friends (hoping they were “good” friends), new friends, games (healthy and not) potential partners, events, and ways we can feel like we belong. What few of us realize, is the apps often contribute to our suffering.

Today, our phones are tiny computers; complete with tracking devices and communication options.

EVERYTIME YOU ‘GET AN APP’, YOU SHARE A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION THAT YOU’VE STORED IN YOUR GIZMO, SUCH AS:

YOUR CONTACTS (and all the info you have - not just their names)

YOUR PHOTOS (think “training facial recognition AI”)

YOUR PREFERENCES for every app you use and visit; including things you clicked on when you were trying to get them off your screen. Yup, they are now considered your ‘preference’)

AND MUCH MORE. REMEMBER: your phone knows where you are at all times.

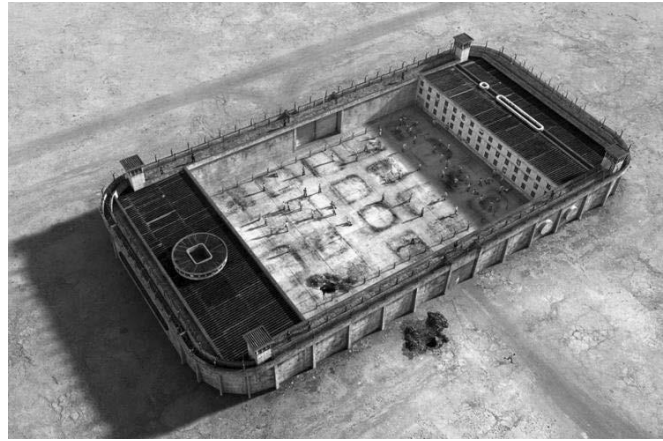
A LITTLE FOOD FOR THOUGHT ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/social-media-addiction/>

Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas.

Due to the effect that it has on the brain, social media is addictive both physically and psychologically. According to a new study by Harvard University, self-disclosure on social networking sites lights up the same part of the brain that also ignites when taking an addictive substance. The brain receives a “reward” and associates the activity with positive reinforcement.

The phenomena of social media addiction can largely be contributed to the dopamine-inducing social environments. Social networking sites have been developed to produce the same neural circuitry found in gambling and recreational drugs. Studies have shown



Modern Day Prison by Banksy

that the constant stream of retweets, likes, and shares from these sites have affected the brain’s reward area to trigger the same kind of chemical reaction as drugs.

Addictive social media use will look much like that of any other substance use disorder, including mood modification (i.e., engagement in social media leads to a favorable change in emotional states), salience (i.e., behavioral, cognitive, and emotional preoccupation with social media), tolerance (i.e., ever increasing use of social media over time), withdrawal symptoms (i.e., experiencing unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms when social media use is restricted or stopped), conflict (i.e., interpersonal problems ensue because of social media usage), and relapse (i.e., addicted individuals quickly revert back to their excessive social media usage after an abstinence period).

"I used to think communication was the key until I realized comprehension is."

- Banksy

Here are a few organizations that want to help you use social media in a healthy way!

Center for
Humane
Technology

The Center for Humane Technology

<https://www.humanetech.com/>

As long as social media companies profit from addiction, depression, and division, our society will continue to be at risk

Ledger of Harms that tech companies have no desire to address: (edited by sk)

- Misinformation, conspiracy theories, and fake news make it difficult to make sense of the world.
- Loss of crucial abilities including memory and focus making it harder to think and to pay attention.
- Stress, loneliness, feelings of addiction can lead to physical and mental health problems.
- Less empathy, more confusion and misinterpretation puts a strain on relationships.
- Propaganda, distorted dialogue & a disrupted democratic process impacts elections.
- Broadcast amplification of -isms reinforces an appeal to authority for regulation.
- Children face physical, mental and social challenges from developmental delays to suicide.
- Tech limitations can be difficult to adopt; gizmo 'house rules' are critical

THEIR PODCAST: Your Undivided Attention - <https://www.humanetech.com/podcast>

TAKE CONTROL! Got in too deep? Here are important steps to increase well-being and regain control.

<https://www.humanetech.com/take-control>

Look Up <https://lookup.live/>

Helping young people thrive in the digital world.

The logo for LOOKUP, with 'LOOK' in a bold, dark font and 'UP' in a lighter, outlined font.

Youth leaders taking action to challenge the digital ecosystem and our unrealistic social norms so we can level the playing field and improve the mental health and well-being of young people.

They also offer a Community Hub: a platform where youth can collaborate with others around the world. (Adults can learn a lot from the youth who have lived their entire lives in the digital world!)

Addiction Center

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/social-media-addiction/>

Research has shown that there is an undeniable link

between social media use, negative mental health, and low self-esteem.

The logo for Addiction Center, featuring a stylized cross icon and the text 'Addiction Center'.

Some apps that help us think better:

Pocket Biases <https://pocket-biases.glideapp.io/> It will help you recognize the excuse biases to strengthen your HONEST BIAS. The app. lists a different bias each day...and you can search through biases. **"A bias a day keeps our hubris away."** - Buster Benson, app creator and author of the *Cognitive Biases Cheat Sheet* (featured in this packet) and the book *Why Are We Yelling?*

Mind Games: www.mindgames.com Full of tests to help improve mental agility, no matter how old the user is, including critical thinking skills.. Most games can be completed in less that 5 min.; just enough time for a brain workout. The app is free, or \$5 for the ad-free version.

READING RECOMMENDATION: *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* BY Shoshana Zuboff 2019 Public Affairs.