

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Is Social Media Hurting Your Self-Esteem?

We are highly integrated into social networks, sharing our own lives and following along with the lives of loved ones, acquaintances and practical strangers.

Many people utilize social networks to stay connected to friends and family, and this is a great way to stay in touch. Social media provides us a way to share and interact that has never been possible before. This truly does provide benefits of being able to share exciting news, show pictures of grandkids, and keeping you connected across the globe.

But is there a downside to social media?

Some research has called in to question is how our interaction with these exchanges and interactions impact our lives. While it is great to see all of these accomplishments from others it can create an environment where we are constantly comparing ourselves to the achievements of others.

Dealing with this comparison is a challenging experience for many as it is so frequently being viewed. Additionally, for those who feel as if they aren't achieving as much as their "friends" or "followers" it can have a significant impact on their self-esteem.

Similarly, people who aren't getting the interaction they hope for on social networks can begin to feel as if they are alone and sometimes begin to feel inadequate. Some college students have reported feeling anxious over posting inventive and exciting information as to attract enough attention for their followers. Though these online interactions may seem small and relatively insignificant to some, but to others they are incredibly important.

This seems to be most apparent in younger generations. Some in Generation Z have reported feeling anxious and worried when they are not able to access their social media. While this may not make sense to everyone, this generation has grown up with social media as an integrated part of their life.

While it has again offered them experiences that would not have been possible otherwise, this has shifted how they interact with their peers and how they form their self-esteem. Although external validation has almost certainly always been a part of our self-esteem this is a whole new way of receiving that validation.

And truly social media can be validating, but research has shown that the best social network to obtain this validation would be one of your close friends and family. At this point no such network exists and it's quite the challenge to keep such a limited social network on the ones that exist. It almost defeats the purpose they have at this point.

Being that social media and electronic interactions are commonplace in our lives today, how are we to deal with the potential negative impact it can have on our lives?

- Start paying attention to your reaction when you're feeling down about you interactions, or comparing yourself to others online.
- When you have these types of reactions or feelings, decide how much importance you want to give the interactions.
    - Just because someone made a negative comment on your post doesn't mean they are attacking you or dislike you as a person.

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- If you find that you are becoming overwhelmed or bogged down in your online interactions it may be time to take a break.
    - Even an hour away from your social media focusing on an activity that you enjoy can be thoroughly helpful in coping with self-esteem concerns.

As always these interactions and situations affect everyone differently and it is important that you deal with them appropriately. If you're having trouble finding ways to deal with some of the challenges social media interactions can create contact us at the EAP. We can help you work through your concerns and find some effective ways to cope.