

Social Media: Risks and Benefits for Mental Health



Katie Flanagan, PsyD
Utah Center for Evidence Based Treatment

About Me:

- Post Doctoral Resident at UCEBT on both the Anxiety and Mood and DBT Teams
- Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from PGSP-Stanford PsyD Consortium
- Generalist with a passion/specialty in working with adolescents and young adults
- I grew up in the Silicon Valley
- I have used a variety of interventions to help form solid relationships



Who is this talk for?

- Healthcare providers and educators who work with adolescents and young adults
- Parents
- Individuals who want to know more about how social media is affecting their own mental health or their loved ones

Objectives

- Provide an overview of social media use among adolescents and young adults
- Describe the current research on the impact of social media on mental health
- List factors to consider regarding how to interact more effectively on social media
- Describe potential treatment interventions to target the negative effects of social media use on mental health

What is Social Media?

Refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content with others, verbally or visually

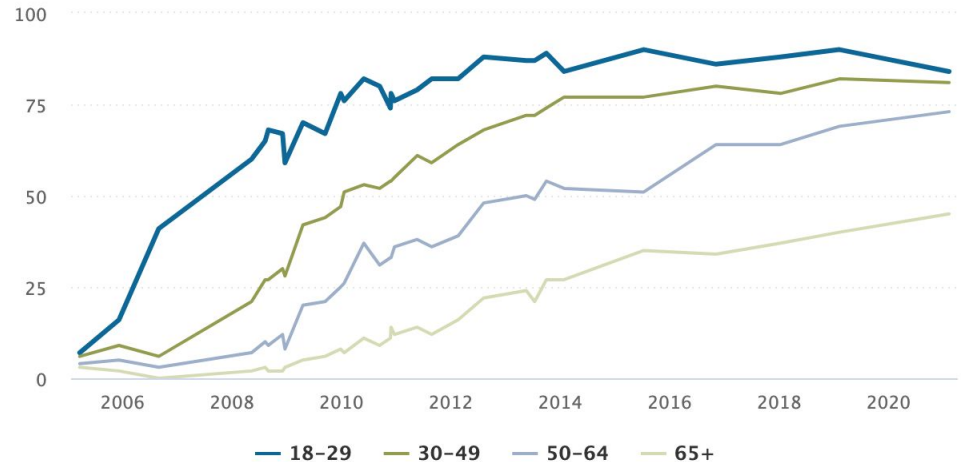


The Rise of Social Media

- 2012-2018: daily use of social media increased among teens, from about 50% → more than 80%
- Most recent statistics indicate that 92% of teenagers are active social media
- Worldwide people spend on average more than 2 hours on social media daily



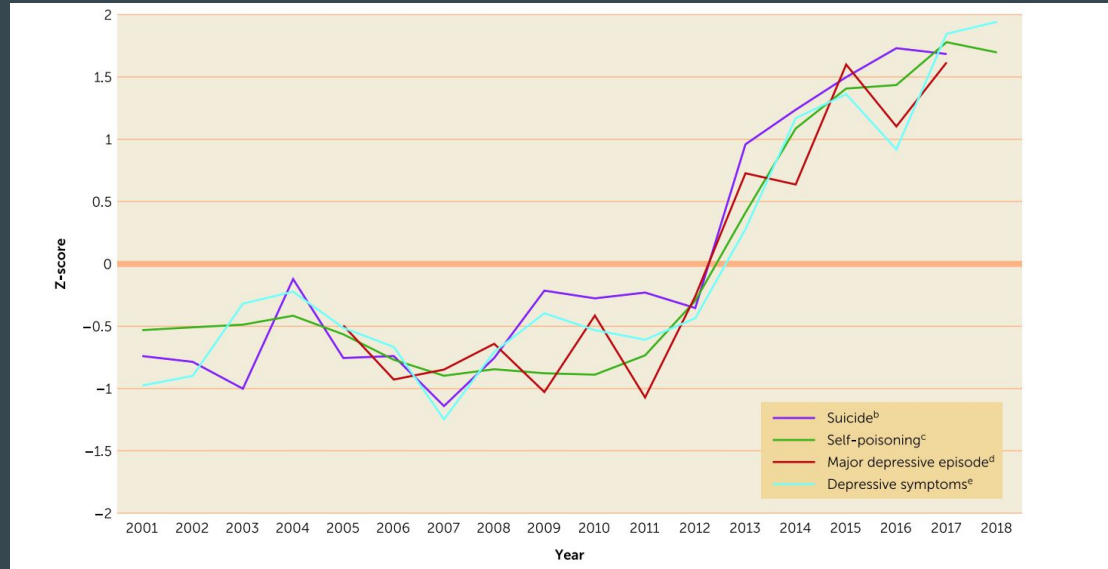
% of U.S. adults who say they use at least one social media site, by age



Trends in Mental Health Among Adolescents



- U.S. adolescent mental health has worsened considerably over the last decade
- Increases have been in both self-report measures and objectively measured behaviors including self-harm, suicide attempts and suicide



**Is social media to blame
for worsening
adolescent/young adult
mental health?**

What does the research say?

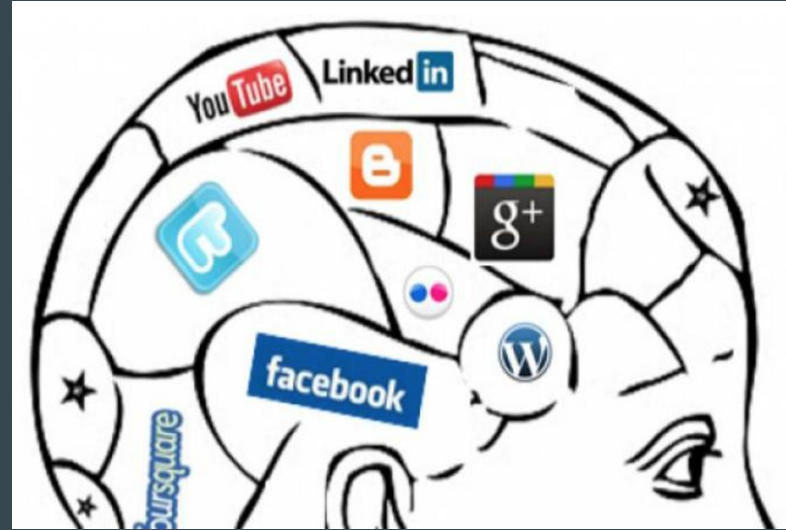


- There is a significant correlation between social media and mental health issues
 - A 2019 systematic review of 13 studies measuring the influence of social media on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents found a general correlation between social media use and mental health problems (Keles, McCrae & Grealish, 2019)
 - A 2017 systematic review of 11 studies measuring social media use and depressive symptoms in children and adolescents showed a small but statistically significant relationship (McCrae, Gettings, & Pursell, 2017).
 - A meta-analysis of 23 studies showed correlation of problematic Facebook use and psychological distress in adolescent and young adults (Marino, Gini, Vieno, & Spada, 2018).
- Studies also show the benefits of social media and enabling people to express their thoughts and feelings, and to receive social support (Deters & Mehl, 2013; Lenhart et al., 2015; Lilley, Ball, & Vernon, 2014; O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Rosen, 2011).

What is it doing to the brain?

We are just beginning to investigate!

- Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study
 - 10 year study where participants undergo once-yearly brain scans to track brain development
- Results from the first cross-sectional data published indicated that, among all forms of media, time spent on social media was the least associated with structural brain changes linked to vulnerability to psychiatric disease



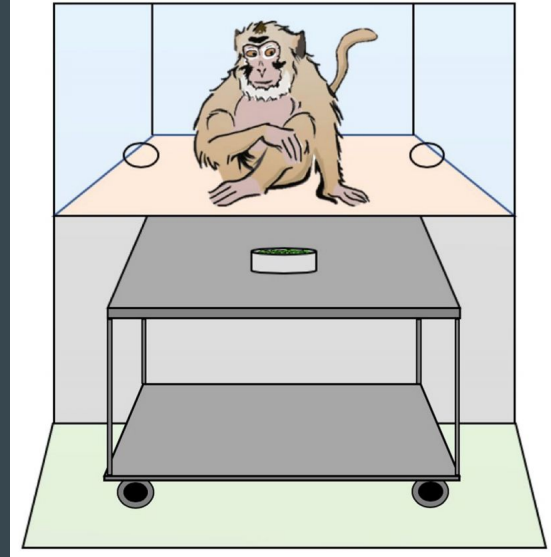
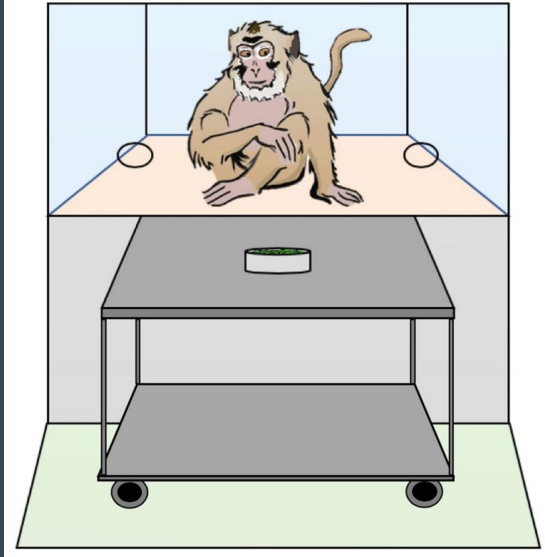
**Factors to consider
regarding the relationship
between social media and
mental health**

Time Spent on Social Media

- Many studies have found a link between time spent on social media and mental health issues, particularly in girls, BUT these have all been cross-sectional research
- An 8 year longitudinal study examining the association between time spent on social media and depression and anxiety in adolescents (13-20) found that increased time spent on social media was not associated with increased mental health issues
- Amount of screen time may not be the main issue

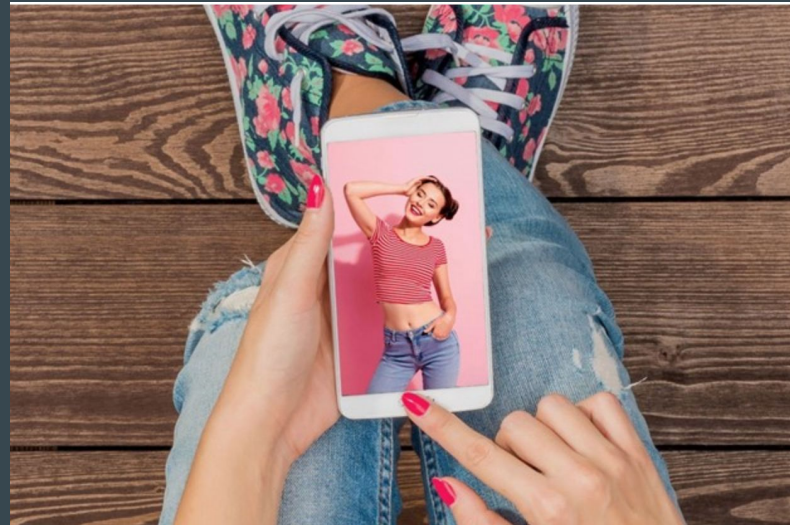


Social Comparison



Social Comparison

Social comparison refers to the tendency of using other people as sources of information to determine how we are doing relative to others (ability comparison), or how we should behave, think, and feel (opinion comparison)



Social Comparison

	UPWARDS You > Me “You’re a better dancer”	DOWNWARDS You < Me “I’m sorry you don’t have a job”
POSITIVE EFFECTS	Inspiration, motivation, hope	Gratitude
NEGATIVE EFFECTS	Envy, dissatisfaction, self-criticism	Scorn, pity

Sleep

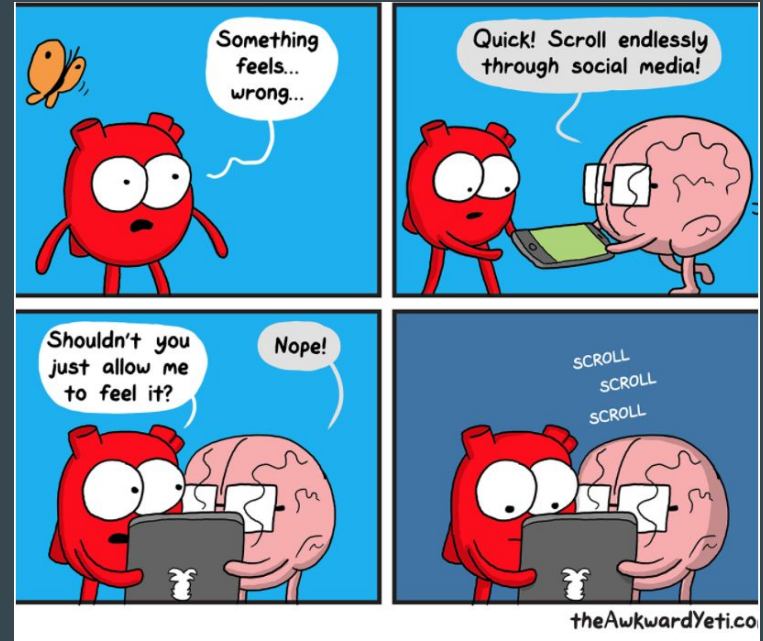
- 40% of adolescents report that they use a mobile device within five minutes before going to sleep
- 36% report waking up to check their device at least once during the night



Increased time on social media is associated with poorer sleep patterns including later onset of sleep, later wake up time, and trouble falling asleep after waking up during the night.

Problematic Use

- Being unable to control impulses to use social media
- Constantly thinking about social media
- Feeling bad with social media is restricted
- Attaching vital importance to social media
- Reduced interest in other hobbies
- Regular arguments because of your social media use
- Using social media as an escape/to avoid emotions



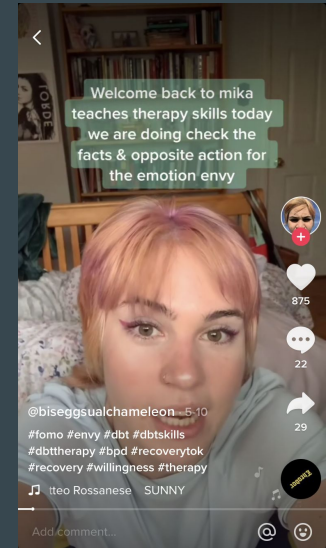
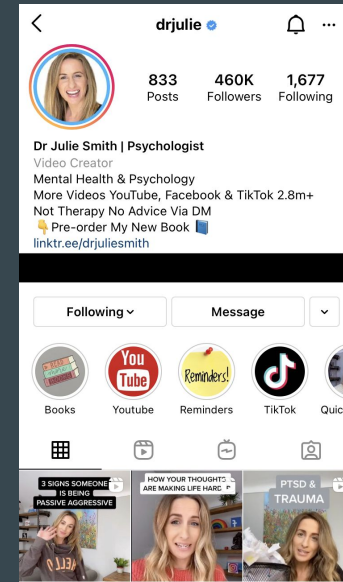
Cyberbullying

- Many adolescents experience cyberbullying (i.e., bullying via digital media)
- Cyberbullying is a significant risk factor for suicidal ideation and attempts and has been identified as a key mediator for the link between social media use and mental health



Benefits!

- Increased social support and connection
- Increased self-esteem
- Opportunities for self-expression
- Increased empathy (Vossen & Valkenburg, 2016)
- Increased access to informal education/resources



Social Media and Diverse Populations



Benefits

- Gives access to role models
- Serves as an informal learning environment during the identity development process
- Provide emotional and social support
- Help with access to resources

Risks

- High prevalence and intensity of hate speech, harassment, and misinformation
- Viewing of race-related/LGBTQ+- related traumatic events online (ex: viral videos of police shootings, immigrant detainment etc)



Potential Guidelines

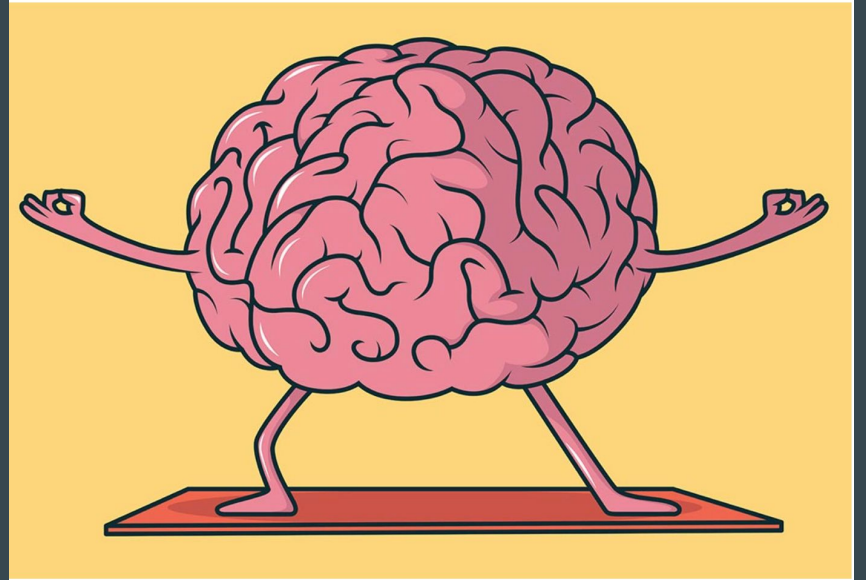
- Set aside “screen-free/social media-free” times and areas of the home like bedtime
- Model healthy screen-time behavior
- Talk to teens/young adults about their social media use
- Teach digital media literacy
 - Learn how media communicates and how to examine messages regarding certain topics like nutrition and body image, alcohol and drugs, or sexuality
 - Resource: <http://actforyouth.net/adolescence/toolkit/teens.cfm>

Treatment Interventions!

Increasing Psychological Flexibility

We have to figure out how to have modern minds that allow us to step into the challenges of the modern world

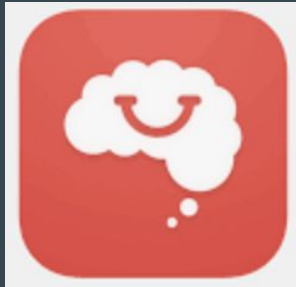
- Steven Hayes, PhD



Mindfulness

- A technique for living in the moment nonjudgmentally
- Check in with yourself before, during, and/or after using social media and ask yourself:
 - How am I doing?
 - How is this app making me feel? How did I feel after looking at that picture?
 - What thoughts are running through my mind?

TIME TO PRACTICE!!

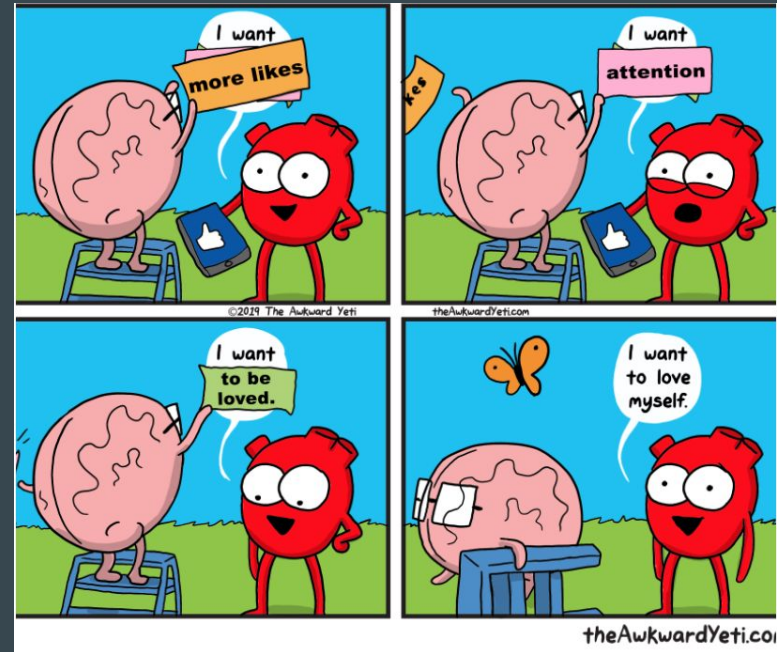


Values

When trying to figure out goals for social media think about your values. What is important to you? What would you like to protect?

- Sleep?
- Family time?
- Education?
- Focus?

Then move from your values to how to change your behavior regarding social media



Thank you!

Contact:

kaitlin.flanagan@ucebt.com

