

# Facebook Depression



Social media is no longer simply a form of entertainment or an online time waster. It is now an extension of every teenager's life. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 22 percent of teens access their social media site more than 10 times a day, over 50 percent access more than once a day. This means that almost every single teenager in America is participating in some way, in an online social networking site. In addition to providing another positive avenue to make friends and socialize, online networking also provides another negative source of rejection, cruelty and bullying. This can lead to what is commonly referred to as, "Facebook Depression".

**The Virtual Playground:** Depression in teenagers is commonly as a result of social comparison. Teenagers hold themselves in a constant state of comparison as they walk through the world. Teenagers silently compare everything from their looks and clothing to their families and socio-economic status. Whether subconsciously or deliberate, teenagers will constantly size themselves up against anyone and everyone else. Social media provides them another way to do this. Through this medium, teenagers will inevitably find circumstances where they are inferior to others, which can lead to a constant sense of rejection and an ever decreasing self-esteem.

**Virtual World vs. Real World:** Whether surfing social networks or not, the internet itself can also be a trigger for increased depression. In a world of instant gratification, teens will almost always choose the easiest form of communication. Today, this does not always require face-to-face or even voice-to-voice contact. Constantly communicating via text, chats or tweet can lead to internet addiction, which is snowballing across the country. Internet addiction occurs when a teenager has trouble controlling how much time they spend online and it begins to interfere with their daily life. Online socializing can detract from or even eliminate human interaction. The Journal of Pediatrics has found benefits in personal communication including enhanced understanding, social skills, vocabulary and cognitive development. After teenagers spend a majority of their time on social media sites, and lose that element of personal communication, they are at risk for slower language development, social isolation and internet addiction. All of these lead to an increased chance for teenage depression.

**The Chicken or the Egg Syndrome:** Most mental health experts agree there is a definite link between internet usage and depression, but what they don't agree on is what came first. Are teenagers depressed because they spend too much time online? Or, are teenagers spending more time online, because they are depressed? This question is debatable, but there is no denying the strong and distinct link between depression and online time.

**What Now?** Understanding the risks and warnings of overusing social media, we can navigate our networking sites a little more carefully to avoid the pitfalls. First, we must remember people will always share good news before bad. When it seems like every Facebook friend is posting about their great vacation or new car, they are most likely not going to mention the debt they are

in or the rude comments they received earlier that day. Second, social networking should never replace eye contact. It might be necessary to set up computer rules, install monitoring software or talk with your children about their online use. Learn what you can about the sites your children are visiting, and become an active member of their virtual world, not merely a spectator.

<http://sociallyactive.com/facebook-depression/>