

The Effects of Social Media on Teenagers

As parents, we strive day in and day out to provide healthy meals, drive our kids to soccer practice, cheer at the games; attend parent-teacher meetings at school and teach them to say “no” to drugs and other bad habits. While we are busy covering all the basics of being a good parent, we can be far too oblivious of the effects the social media is having on children.

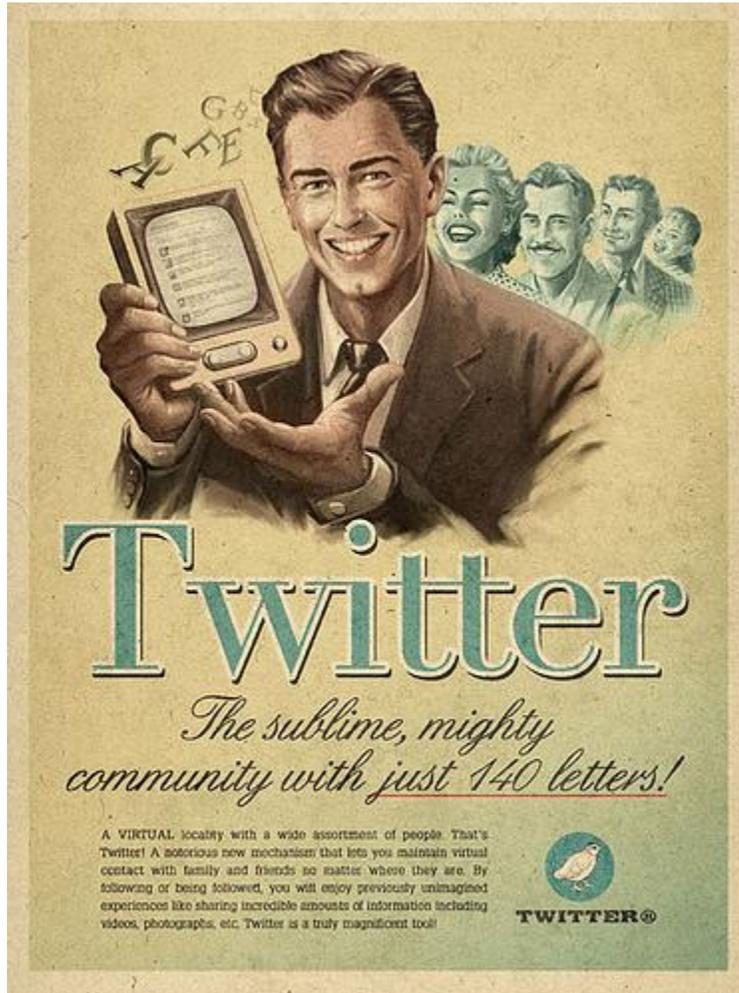


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Kids today are as [technologically connected](#) as anyone on the planet has ever been. They have access to social media like [Facebook](#) and Twitter and they can be able to chat in real time with their friend who are a thousand miles away. Various reports suggest that about eighty-three percent of American youth use their phones for email, mobile internet and texting. The report further states that these American teens send and receive text messages 144 times a day. If the teens are not texting, they are usually on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter where they chat, share photos and video and participate in gaming. The negative effects of being this “plugged in” is beginning to take enormous effect on kids. Because social interaction comes overwhelmingly online rather than face to face, American youth are showing severe lack of

social skills. They are often more comfortable with technology than they are with talking to people. They have not learned the proper communication and conversation skills, how to deal with interpersonal situations and how to date and get to know other people behind the screen. Researchers have found that the middle-school, high school and college students who used Facebook at least once during a 15 minute period get lower grades overall. Many teens usually spend sleepless nights on social media without the knowledge of their parents. The disruption of sleep has had adverse effects on the teens. It has led to cases of insomnia, mood swings, attention deficits at school and increased obesity just to mention a few. These are some of the serious negative effects of social media on teenagers and issues that are arising with kids often addicted to Facebook. With such overwhelming evidence of the negative effects of social media on our children, why then, are many parents not taking more action to protect their children? There perhaps are three major reasons: 1) **Parents are unaware** of the issues involved in the online connections. While kids are plugged in to social media, only about 40% of parents are involved themselves. Parents may not be aware of their children's "pages" and don't fully understand privacy policies and they don't realize what kinds of public postings are taking place, involving their children. 2) **Parents don't want to interfere** in their children's social lives. Most parents want their children to be popular, accepted and enjoy a happy social life. Parents sometimes concern themselves with children's "rights" – their right to privacy and their right to interact in today's popular forums. Parents want to allow their children to be as connected as the other kids they associate with, and so they tell themselves that everything is ok. 3) **Parents are afraid to take a stand**. Many of "modern" parents are becoming apathetic to the real dangers that too much social media can present to their children. They don't want to push their teens away and so they allow their participation in social media to go unchecked rather than make a "big deal" out of it. The problems this new online society creates are not going away and will continue to grow. Parents must get off the sidelines and [get involved!](#) Parents have the responsibility to protect their children and be aware of what is going on in the online world. Investigate and help your child adjust privacy settings. Be aware of who can see what they post, and what is being posted about them. Take with them about [online safety](#). Make sure your teens have plenty of offline time as well. Restrict the times and frequency of online interaction.

- Place all phones in the docking station at night where they are required to stay until everyone leaves for work and school in the morning.
- Consider allowing siblings to share a phone they can "check out" from mom or dad.
- Create family-determined "unplugged" hours when children can participate in other activities such as outdoor games, reading, talking, playing together, etc.

Social media has a tremendous effect on us today, but with parental participation and kids' cooperation, the effects can be positive for everyone.