

# THE HEALTHY CHRISTIAN

Social Media and Mental Health

Kingston, Jamaica, W.I

CNN recently released an article with the following headline, “Nearly half of teens say social media is bad for youth mental health, report finds.” The article went on to say that, “The impact of social media on young people’s mental health and well-being is a growing topic of concern among parents, educators, health care professionals and regulators.”

As the human family we should all be deeply concerned about issues that affect our young people, because they are inexperienced and are still developing. Thus they are among the vulnerable class of society and are also the future of the same.

According to a Pew Research in October of 2024, teens were asked how often they use the five platforms: Youtube, TikTok, Instagram, Snapshot and Facebook.

Overall, 73% say they use Youtube daily, about 15% say they use it almost constantly. For Tiktok that number is about six-in-ten, with about 16% say they are on it almost constantly. Approximately 50% of teens say that they use Instagram and Snapchat daily and about one-in-ten say they are on these platforms constantly.

Social media and the various technological devices have the potential to be addictive because, like all other addictive drugs, they activate the reward pathway of our brain each time that we use them. This rewards pathway involves the release of dopamine, which is a neurotransmitter.

Whenever dopamine is released it activates feelings of pleasure or reward and that makes us happy or excited. When we achieve a desire, receive praise or external validation, or gain new knowledge our brain releases dopamine.

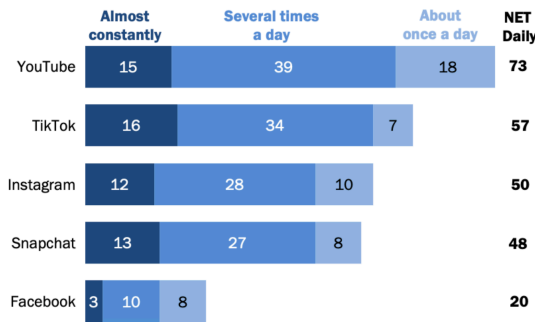
“So shall the **knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul**: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a **reward**.” Proverbs 24:14 KJV. The Bible gives a little insight about our psychology. Learning something new is rewarding to us; and by comparing scientific studies, we know that it is because of the release of dopamine.

What makes social media dangerous is that it is engineered to manipulate users’ mind to come back frequently. For example, red notification icons which grab the attention, designing the news feed in such a way that one cannot reach the end, sending notification whenever one receives a ‘like’ to increase the desire for external validation, and promoting short content that makes people move on quickly. All these cause a constant release of dopamine and feeds addiction, which will eventually unbalance the mind leading to depression and anxiety.

Scientists are presenting research stating that this over release of dopamine could lead to the degeneration of dopamine producing cells, which can be permanent as in the case of Parkinson’s disease. According to Pubmed, “**Too much for your own good: Excessive dopamine damages neurons and contributes to Parkinson's disease:**” Can we imagine a future society where over 75% of us humans have a brain dysfunction? That is unthinkable.

**Roughly three-quarters of teens visit YouTube daily, while around 6 in 10 say this about TikTok**

% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they visit or use the following apps or sites ...



Note: Figures may not add up to NET values due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept. 18-Oct. 10, 2024.  
“Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024”

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The body and mind has balancing mechanisms. When we get a high from dopamine then there is serotonin to put us into a more calm, rest and digest state. Serious mental health consequences will result if there is an imbalance of any neurotransmitter in the brain. In this case we are seeing a rise in anxiety, depression and even suicide among our youth because of over usage of social media and other forms of media entertainment.

The Lord is interested in our overall wellbeing, and that includes our mental health. We the human family, not only those in the church but the entire world, have cost much. The Saviour has purchased us with His own blood and thus our body and mind belong to Him. He constantly works to preserve it in perfect health and He desires our co-operation.

Jesus wants to help us to overcome social media addiction, like He wants to help any person suffering from drug addiction. He counsels us in His word, **“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.”** Proverbs 4:26 KJV.

The first step to overcoming is to ponder or reason in your mind. Does social media affect me when carrying out my day-to-day tasks? Does it prevent me from concentrating? Does it cause me to lose sleep and lose interest in my relationships? Does it make me feel insecure about my body or life in general? Does it take up too much of my time?

The second step is to pray, pray, pray. Plead with God for the Holy Spirit to help you to take decisive action. If you find that social media is affecting your life negatively, then begin to cut it down. **“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee:”** Matthew 5:30 KJV.

**“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee,** saith the LORD,” Isaiah 41:14 KJV. The Lord is telling us that we have the ability, and also His help, to cut off anything that offends us, even if it is our own right hand.

It sounds gruesome but the point is that our will power is stronger than we think it is. **“What you need to understand is the true force of the will.** This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise.” Steps to Christ pg 47.1 You can choose to put down social media, that choice only you can make. There is not a person who can prevent you from making that choice, not even Satan.

When you have made that choice, then you are to continue praying and searching the word of God. Christ will give you more of the Holy Spirit’s strength to be able to act upon that decision. Notice that God says that you have to **“cut it off, and cast it away from thee.”** In order to overcome an addiction you have to put the thing out of your sight, for you will be tempted if it is constantly before you, and you may lose these battles.

God would rather have us prevent temptation, than risk failure whilst being tempted. The Lord prayed, **“Lead us not into temptation.”** Luke 11:4. How can you prevent the temptation of using social media? A good way is to remove the apps from your phone and computer. And also put the devices outside of the room you occupy for work.

Another habit is to delay using your phone until later in the day, that way you can prevent being addicted for that entire day. Begin each day in devotion with God, studying your Bible and talking to Him about your life. He cares about every detail of your life and loves to hear you talk to Him. The God of Elijah, is still the One who reigns in the heavens, and He still hears and answers the prayers of His people. God bless you.

#### References:

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