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Stop Using Social Media

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I know how you felt reading the title. If you are a heavy social media user, you probably said:

"What? Who in their right mind would delete their social media accounts? How are they supposed to live life and talk to their friends?"

Don't worry. That was me last year. I understand your feelings. However, the disadvantages of social media and the perks of deleting it far outweigh its benefits. In this post, I will go over the reasons why you should delete all of your social media.

Cons of Social Media

Time-Consuming: A study counted 5 billion internet users and it was concluded that, on average, [an internet user spends 6 hours and 53 minutes online per day](#). 6. HOURS. AND. 53. MINUTES. That is almost a whole third of people's daily lives. Another study concluded that people spend more time on social media in their whole lifetime than grooming, socialising (social media !=socialising) and doing the laundry combined.

It is not as if any of the time spent is valuable. Sure, you may learn one or two 'fun facts, which will make you think that you need social media. You may talk with your friends a lot, which will make you think that your account is required to socialise with people. However, these are all nonsensical excuses that your brain makes to justify getting cheap dopamine. Imagine how much work you can get done, how many actual connections you can make with people, and how many good habits can be formed that will make you happier in the long term than social media.

Affects Your Mental Health: Whenever people hear that social media affects your mental health, they agree but say that it does not affect them specifically. The most common argument I hear is:

"Yeah, I know that it affects other people. However, I am fine with it. I feel normal and do not feel depressed at all.

All I can say is not to trust what your brain tells you whenever you are dealing with any addiction, not just social media. Think about it. The same brain that is telling you that you should keep using social media for meaningless reasons is the one telling you that it is not affecting you.

Social media is a constant source of comparison. You open it up, view a few triggering posts, find out that your favourite actor has passed away, and see your friends perfect lives. Before closing the app, you apply filters to yourself and edit the picture as much as possible for your stories to make yourself look artificially good.

You see, not only is social media fake, it also has an absurd effect on your mental health. It has been proven that many social media platforms track you to show you personalised content. They use human psychology to hook you onto their platforms.

There are two chemicals in your brain that are responsible for happiness:

- Dopamine - released when you are anticipating something good
- Endorphin - released when you are happy

In many cases, the effect of dopamine is much greater than the effect of endorphins. Recall back to a young age when you realised you were about to receive a toy that you had been waiting for for a few days. The feeling you got when you realised you would get it soon was more intense than the actual feeling of getting the toy.

The same trick applies on social media. Many social media platforms show you content that is completely different from the content that you like just before showing you content that you really like. This results in more dopamine being released, with a good amount of endorphin being released as well. To your brain, it has just achieved something great when, in reality, you have not.

Constantly high dopamine and endorphin releases raise your base happiness levels. This is why things that you used to love now seem boring to you. It is not 'growing up'. It is your social media addiction.

Social media metrics also contribute to this. It makes you think that likes and comments are proportional to your worth, which is simply not the case. When you get a like, it is a form of validation that you are valuable to someone. Someone not liking your post does not mean that you are not valuable.

FOMO (fear of missing out) plays a big role as well. The phrase:

"If everyone is using [insert anything here], why shouldn't I?"

is commonly said by an individual who experiences FOMO without the thing in question. There is a constant fear of missing out on information, which simply will not happen. You may miss some arbitrary information that you would not care about otherwise, but this is not a reason at all to continue using social media.

To hook you into their addiction, social media companies hire "attention designers" who take references and inspiration from casinos to keep you hooked.

Before ending this unexpectedly long section, I would like you to read this quote.

"You're either on, and you're connected and distracted all the time, or you're off, but then you're wondering, Am I missing something important? In other words, you're either distracted or you have a fear of missing out."

Tristan Harris, Former Design Ethicist at Google

Privacy: If you post everything you do on social media, there is no longer any privacy. Anything you do is public information. If you have a 'private' account, your friends know everything you do. There is no privacy at all if you keep posting everything on social media.

Then there is the elephant in the room.

Digital Privacy.

It is well-known that apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and some Google apps collect your data like their lives depend on it (technically, they do). Everything from your name to your IP address and phone number to even the amount of network requests you make or the model of your phone. Not to mention, literally everything you do on the app. This all goes to their servers and is used for more advertisements.

It is pretty safe to say that your digital footprint, as it is called, can be nearly eliminated by deleting your accounts. There are more steps that you have to take to take care of your privacy, but preventing data collection from big corporations is a huge step.

Fake News: Fake news. It's everywhere. Even the worst social media addict cannot deny it. You see parody pages that copy the design of famous news channels perfectly and post random news. You see people edit images to exaggerate or divert the subject of an article. There is not much that I need to say. You know what I mean.

Much Worse Sleep: The blue-light from your phone tricks your brain into thinking it's daytime. So, when you use your phone late into the night scrolling on your social media feed, it makes you feel less sleepy.

When this happens, do you know what most people do? They pick up their phones again since they cannot sleep, thinking that they will sleep in 30 minutes when they are sleepy. This cycle goes on. Many individuals of Generation Z do not sleep the whole night for many days on end and instead take naps in the afternoon. Does this sound healthy to you?

And no, using a blue-light filter does not fix the issue. It only slightly reduces its effect.

Decline In Physical Health: When you spend hours and hours a day sitting down with no exercise or action apart from flicking your thumb, what do you think will happen? You may experience the following effects:

1. Weight Gain
2. Back Pain
3. Bad Posture
4. Neck Pain
5. Eye Strain
6. Increased Risk of Heart Disease

Many individuals who use social media are experiencing these problems, which are usually experienced by older people, at ages like 25.

Horrible Productivity: When you are working and are in the zone (a phase in which you do high-quality work without even thinking about it), any minor disturbance will move you out of that state. A notification about someone liking your post can shake you out of the zone. In the long-term, this will waste hours of your time.

Getting Rid of It

So, you are ready. You want to quit social media and break this horrible addiction. You realise the effects it has on your life. However, you do not know where to start. If this is the case, check out '[The AIR Method](#)'. If you would like to read how I did it, please refer to the steps below. Referring to the steps I took may help you understand your weak points and how to combat them.

1. Alternative Contact Details: Make a list of all of your friends and cross out the ones that you know can be reached on other chat applications. Ask the rest for alternative contact methods. This may be through apps like Signal, Session, XMPP, Matrix, or WhatsApp. Just make sure that it is not another social media app.

2. Download Your Data: Download your data to refer to in the future. Most social media platforms include chats along with it so that you can refer back to the chats if needed. A website like [JustGetMyData](#)

will allow you to quickly get to this section. Most websites place it in places which are difficult to access to prevent people from deleting their accounts.

3. Start Using Healthier Apps: Quitting social media 'cold-turkey' (abruptly) may work for the first few days but it will cause you to fail completely. It is better to slowly reduce your usage by using healthier apps.

If you haven't already, start using RSS feeds. There is nothing wrong with using old technology. RSS provides you with a similar feed to social media but with content you actually like and want to read. It is managed by you, not an algorithm. You read what you want and stop. There is no algorithm or endless feed that compels you to keep using the app.

I am going to make a post about RSS feeds soon. It will be updated here.

4. Announce: It is also important to announce that you are deleting your accounts. This may not be necessary if you have less than five friends you talk to on your accounts but it is important if you have many friends. This announcement will allow your friends to contact you and tell you their alternative forms of contact. It will also allow people to know that you are leaving for good.

5. Take The Plunge!: The moment you have been waiting for. Click on the delete button.

This is much easier said than done, however. Most social media accounts have a grace period during which if you login to your account, your account deletion will be cancelled. For Instagram, the grace period is 1 month. To combat this, I did the following:

1. Removed all recovery options (phone number, 2FA) from my accounts and changed my email to one from [TempMail](#) to prevent password reset
2. Generated a random 128-character password in [Bitwarden \(my password manager\)](#)
3. Changed my account password to the new password
4. Deleted my account
5. Immediately delete all records of the password and restart your device to clear it from your clipboard

These steps were drastic but they practically cemented the fact that my account was going to be deleted, no matter what.

Conclusion

There is not much left to say. I am much, much happier without social media. I have more time on my hands and I am still getting the information I want from RSS feeds without an algorithm trying to pull me in. Big corporations have much less data about me, I have a lot of time and have produced a lot of work. In terms of academics, my overall percentage in school has increased by over 20%. I find difficult subjects easier and easy subjects a piece of cake.

All in all, if you care about yourself, delete your social media. It is a hellhole that is getting worse by the day.