

Social Media and Social Connections

Are you feeling lonely and depressed lately? It could be caused by spending too much time on social media. Here's some good news though! An easy antidote is just a phone call away. Swapping screen time for one-on-one conversations can make you feel happier and more fulfilled.

It's never been easier to stay in touch. Yet, it can often feel harder to stay connected. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok are a great way to communicate. But, what social media can lack is authenticity and depth. In contrast, person-to-person dialogue can help build and maintain meaningful, fulfilling relationships. [Studies show](#) that people who spend a lot of time on social media often feel depressed, isolated and lonely. So before you log in, ask yourself, "is this healthy for me?"

Filter Fatigue

You've seen the pictures on social media. The woman with clear, glowing skin or blindingly white teeth. Photo filters on sites such as Instagram can make you think, "that can't possibly be real." The same goes for status updates on Facebook. Did that person really go on another jet-setting vacation?

It's important to realize that social media posts are almost always carefully curated. You see a controlled version of someone. And, usually, it is not a realistic representation of a person's daily life. Such "filter fatigue" can harm your mental health. When you constantly see a distorted version of reality, your own life may seem insignificant in comparison.

The Benefits of Going Offline

Unlike social media, one-on-one conversations can be more real and fulfilling. One-on-one conversations can help you feel "heard." So, while your friend's Facebook status may be only a click away, calling them for a chat might be time well spent.

Instead of scrolling, schedule time each week to have direct conversations with your friends and family. These can be in person, on FaceTime or Zoom, or an old-fashioned phone call. What's important is the chance to have back-and-forth dialogue. Small talk is OK as long as you also have real, honest exchanges. The most meaningful relationships are based on trust and vulnerability. You can't establish that if all you do is make small talk.

Don't have a network of friends? No problem. Use social media as a tool to help you. Social media is a great tool to meet new people. Facebook, Reddit and Nextdoor can help you find people with similar interests. Whether it's a book group, nature hikers or movie goers, there are lots of ways to connect. Then, once you've connected, nudge your relationships toward a real-time small group or one-on-one conversations that are direct and authentic.

Cutting the Cord

Mindlessly scrolling social media is a huge time drain. It can get in the way of building meaningful real-life relationships. Apps like RescueTime and screen time features on your cell phone can monitor how much time you spend online, and cut you off if you've exceeded your time allowance.

If you're not ready to back away from social media just yet, just remind yourself often that social media creates a distorted perspective.

Try These Hello4Health Activities

Now that you've minimized your time spent on social media, check out a variety of new ways you can connect with your friends and neighbors:

- [Throwing a Neighborhood Block Party](#)
- [Social Connection Bingo](#)
- [Ready, Set, Connect Through Sports](#)
- [Low-Tech Ways to Stay in Touch](#)
- [Common Interests Create Common Bonds](#)
- [Virtual Book Club](#)