Choices Topic for January: Technology Abuse & Addiction

Followers, Favorites, Facebook, & FOMO

Research suggests that young people who are heavy users of social media (>2 hrs a day on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) are more likely to report poor mental health[1]. Responsible tech use can have positive effects on a teen (e.g. self-expression, emotional support, health information), however, if abused, technology and social media have the ability to ruin close relationships and cause serious psychological harm. The fear of missing out (FOMO) causes teens to become more dependent on social networking sites, leading to potential harmful outcomes for young people's well-being. Self-regulation and monitoring are effective means for protecting youth from anxiety and depression. **Let your peers influence you in a positive way. Don't let social media accounts define you by how many 'Likes" you receive.**

Fast Facts

- 91% of adolescents use the internet for social media[1].
- Studies have shown that brain scans of young people with internet addiction are similar to those of people with substance addictions to alcohol, cocaine, and cannabis[6].
- Social media use is linked with increased rates of anxiety, depression, and poor sleep[1].
- 86% of adolescents sleep with their phone in the bedroom, often under their pillow or in hand[3].
- 25% of adolescents report sleep disruptions due incoming text messages[4].
- Poor sleep has been linked to increased computer and Internet use.
- Among teens, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular apps[5].

Discussion Questions

Students:

• Do you think social media use improves or worsens conditions such as depression and anxiety?

• How often does your cell phone distract you from doing homework or studying for tests?

• In your opinion, how much tech use it too much?

• What self-care strategies do you partake in to escape from technology?

• Have you ever used a device for longer than you intend to? Why/why not?

• How does stress impact your technology usage?

5 Tips to Keep Children from Becoming Addicted to Tech

1. **Let your actions speak louder than your words.** Lead by example and make face-to-face interaction more important than being on your smartphone.
2. **Explain how virtual 'likes' can affect the brain and body.** Having an open and honest conversation with your kids about how these devices can affect them physically and mentally may put the brakes on.
3. **Set limits on screen time.** This is the most obvious step but perhaps the most difficult to enforce. Take away the chargers. Use screen-time management apps. It's important to stop addiction before it starts.
4. **Have screen-free zones in your house.** Don't let your kids take their devices into their bedroom. Limit it to commons areas.
5. **Indulge in the real world.** As a family, embrace art, music, cooking, and more. Get outside, put our feet in the grass and experience the world.

Parents & Faculty:

• Do you think social media use improves or worsens conditions such as depression and anxiety?

• Does your home/school have screen-free zones?

• How can you help a child engage in things other than technology?

• In your opinion, how much tech use it too much? How does this compare to a child's opinions?

• What ways can you monitor a child's tech use without invading privacy?

• How do you model responsible tech use for you child/student?

References: 1. RSPH Young Health Movement – Status of Mind; 2. https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/29/us-addresses-internet-addiction-with-funded-research.html; 3. Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010; 4. Van den Bulck, 2003; 5. http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/04/PI_TeensandTech_Update2015_0409151.pdf#3; 6. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/internet-addiction-changes-brain-similar-to-cocaine-study/

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