



Psychological scientists examine potential beneficial and harmful effects of social media on adolescents' social, edu

Youth using social media should be encouraged to use functions that create opportunities for social support, online companionship, and emotional intimacy that can promote healthy socialization.

- Data suggest that youths' psychological development may benefit from this type of online social interaction, particularly during periods of social isolation, when experiencing stress, when seeking connection to peers with similar developmental and/or health conditions, and perhaps especially for youth who experience adversity or isolation in offline environments.^{12,31,4,15}
- Youth with symptoms of mental illness, such as adolescents with social anxiety, depression, or loneliness, for instance, may benefit from interactions on social media that allow for greater control, practice, and review of social interactions. Unfortunately, these populations may also be at higher risk for some of the negative facets of social media use as discussed below.

To reduce the risks of psychological harm, adolescents' exposure to content on social media that depicts illegal or psychologically maladaptive behavior, including content that instructs or encourages youth to engage in health-risk behaviors, such as self-harm (e.g., cutting, suicide), harm to others, or those that encourage eating-disordered behavior (e.g., restrictive eating, purging, excessive exercise) should be minimized, reported, and removed. Moreover, technology should not drive users to this content.

- Evidence suggests that exposure to this content is associated with increased risk of psychological harm.

Adolescents should be routinely screened for signs of “problematic social media use” that can impair their ability to engage in daily roles and routines, and may present risk for more serious psychological harms over time.

- Indicators of problematic social media use include a) a tendency to use social media even when adolescents want to stop, or realize it is interfering with necessary tasks; b) spending excessive effort to ensure continuous access to social media; c) strong cravings to use social media, or disruptions in other activities from missing social media use too much; d) repeatedly spending more time on social media than intended; e) lying or deceptive behavior to retain access to social media use; f) loss or disruption of significant relationships or educational opportunities because of media use.
- Social media use should not restrict opportunities to practice in-person reciprocal social interactions, and should not contribute to psychological avoidance of in-person social interactions.

The use of social media should be limited so as to not interfere with adolescents’ sleep and physical activity.

- Research recommends adolescents get at least 8 hours of sleep each night and maintain regular sleep-wake schedules. Data indicate that technology use particularly within 1 hour of bedtime, and social media use in particular, is associated with sleep disruptions.^{33,34} Insufficient sleep is associated with disruptions to neurological development in adolescent brains, teens’ emotional functioning,^{35,36} and risk for suicide.^{37,38}
- Adolescents’ social media use also should not interfere with or reduce adolescents’ opportunities for physical activity and exercise. Research demonstrates that adolescents who use social media for more than 11.7 hours per week have a 3.8% increase in the risk of depression.³⁹

Adolescents should limit use of social media for social comparison, particularly around beauty- or appearance-related content.

- Research suggests that using social media for social comparisons related to physical appearance, as well as excessive attention to and behaviors related to one's own photos and feedback on those photos, are related to poorer body image, disordered eating, and depressive symptoms, particularly among girls.^{42,43,44,45,46}

Adolescents' social media use should be preceded by training in social media literacy to ensure that users have developed psychologically-informed competencies and skills that will maximize the chances for balanced, safe, and meaningful social media use.

- Emerging science offers preliminary support for the efficacy of Digital Citizenship and Digital Literacy to increase the frequency of positive interactions online⁴⁷; however, more research is needed in this area.⁸
- Additional competencies could also include: 1) questioning the accuracy and representativeness of social media content; 2) understanding the tactics used to spread mis- and disinformation; 3) limiting "overgeneralization" and "mises timation" errors that lead users to incorrectly estimate others' behaviors or attitudes based on social media content (or reactions to content); 4) signs of problematic social media use; 5) how to build and nourish healthy online relationships; 6) how to solve conflicts that can emerge on social media platforms; 7) how to refrain from excessive social comparisons online and/or better understand how images and content can be manipulated; 8) as noted above, how to recognize online structural racism and critique racist messages; and 9) how to safely communicate about mental health online.

Substantial resources should be provided for continued scientific examination of the positive and negative effects of social media on adolescent development.

- A substantial investment in research funding is needed, including long-term longitudinal research, studies of younger children, and research on marginalized populations.
- Access to data among independent scientists (including data from tech com

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