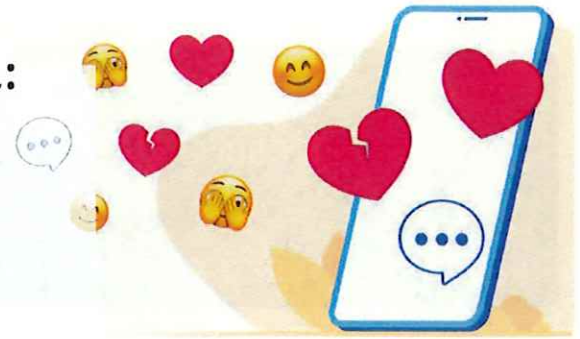


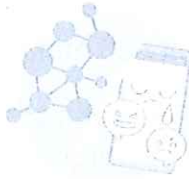
The Good and Bad of Social Media: What Research Tells Us

The connection between social media and mental health is complicated and personal. Everyone responds to social media differently. Here are a few ways to think about how social media impacts kids and teens.



Potential Benefits

Social Connection: Teens can engage with friends and family online.



Potential Risks

Cyberbullying: Teens may experience or witness bullying, harassment or aggressive behavior online.

Identity, Self-Expression, and Self-Affirmation: Youth can share their interests and activities through texts, videos and images, which can help them better understand who they are.



Body Image and Disordered Eating: Social comparison is common, especially on image-based platforms. Image-altering filters and profiles that focus on disordered eating or “thinspiration” can lead to negative self-esteem and impact how teens think about their appearance.

Community Support for Young People's Identities: Social media can be used as a safe space to gain social support, learn through each other's stories and find validation through shared experiences.



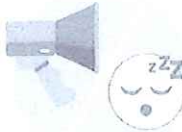
Harmful Content: Despite platforms' best efforts to prevent it, harmful content like pornography, child sexual abuse material, self-harm depictions, violence, exposure to discriminatory language or accounts selling illegal substances can be found on social media.

Interest-Driven Exploration: Teens, as they develop more independence, can pursue new ideas and hobbies online or follow educational, health-related or inspirational accounts.



Unwanted Contact: Teens may receive unwanted contact from strangers or from companies trying to sell them things.

Empowerment and Civic Engagement: Teens can use social media to learn more about causes they care about, engage in activism and connect with communities on and offline.



Sleep: Sleep is essential and can be negatively impacted when teens postpone bedtime so that they can continue to use social media for entertainment or feel pressure to be responsive to friends. The use of mobile devices during bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep and to get deep, restorative sleep that teens need.

Fun and Entertainment: Whether watching funny videos, playing online games or keeping up with music and pop culture, social media can help teens relax and have fun.



Digital Stress: Constant access to a wide array of social content designed to keep teens online as long as possible can be overwhelming. Teens may get anxious about likes and engagements, have fear of missing out (FoMO) when away from their device or struggle against expectations to always be available.

For more information on what research tells us about the impacts social media has on youth and what teens can do, check out our website: [Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#) and browse previously submitted questions on our [Question and Answer Portal](#).

Social media can...



help connect.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Social Media and
Youth Mental Health
FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

RESEARCH-BASED TIPS FROM PEDIATRICIANS FOR FAMILIES

When it comes to helping your children build healthy digital habits, you may not know where to start. Here are some small steps that can make a big difference for your family:

1. Build a family media plan.

- Work together to set rules about social media use so you and your children agree on how devices fit into your lives.

2. Balance time with and without devices.

- Create screen-free times and places in your home (e.g., meals, bedtime).
- Set do-not-disturb times and media time limits.
- Track online activities and talk about which ones may be problematic.
- Plan regular screen-free activities your family enjoys.
- Make a habit of turning off media that isn't in use. Try music if you need ambient noise.

3. Talk about social media.

- Start regular, open-minded conversations with your children (even the youngest ones!) about their media use, and yours.
- Ask questions like:
 - » What do you like about social media platforms?
 - » How do you feel when you're on social media? And when I'm on social media?
 - » Have you seen anything concerning?
- Help children understand:
 - » What's real and what's edited.
 - » How to recognize ads or inappropriate content.
 - » How media and emotions connect.
- Make sure your kids know they can come to you about their experiences online.

4. Set a good example.

- Include your own habits in discussions about social media usage.
- When your attention is on your device, tell your kids what you're doing.
- Be kind to others online and talk to your kids about how you are using media for good.

5. Optimize your family's online experience.

- Choose quality content to use together as a family.
- Know which platforms are age- and content-appropriate for your children.
- Set and follow safety rules for who we can chat with online.
- Set privacy settings at the most secure level.
- Watch for warning signs, like if your child is:
 - » Withdrawing from social interaction and hobbies.
 - » Letting screen time interfere with physical activity, healthy eating or bedtime.
- If you're concerned about your child's social media usage or mental health, talk with your pediatrician.

Visit [AAP.org/socialmedia](https://www.aap.org/socialmedia)
for more resources
and to submit your questions.

ACTION PLAN FOR REDUCING SCREEN TIME USE

Let's set a schedule for when you **DON'T** want to use your device.

From: _____ To: _____

Mon Tue **Wed** Thu Fri **Sat** Sun

Check all the activities below that you will do **without** using your device:

Study	Eat	Drive	Exercise	Personal hygiene
Watching TV	Homework	Write your own	Write your own	Write your own

It might take some practice and patience, as it will not be hard to give up using your device. It would be helpful to have people that can support you during this process. Think about who these people are:

Person #1	Person #2	Person #3
In what way can this person help me?	In what way can this person help me?	In what way can this person help me?

ACTION PLAN FOR OVERCOMING SCREEN ADDICTION

Discuss your screen time habits with your family and friends, so that you can count with their support

Make a list of other things that you can do instead of using your device(s)

Allow yourself to use your device(s) when you have already done the things on your to-do checklist

Set a date that you will start to put your action plan in place

Turn off all screens during family meals and outings

Keep a journal to use it to reflect on your thoughts and your feelings

Put your device(s) in a place where you can't easily see nor access