

Handling Social Media

By Jack Snell



Instagram

Pros:

- Like any other social media platform, it allows you to share information and pictures that you find to be relevant, interesting or important, with friends, family and that dude that you don't know but seems like a good guy and likes all your stuff.
- This is tied into one of the negative aspects of Insta but it is one of its most appealing features. Much like choosing what you wear or who you hang out with, Instagram is an incredibly powerful tool to create your online and real life image. On my Instagram, I generally post colourful (some call it over saturated but whatever) pictures because I want to be seen as a happy guy.
- Instagram is just a great place to indulge in whatever you find entertaining. I love cars so probably 85% of my feeds are posts with or about cars. Whenever I want a quick break, I can scroll through and look at gorgeous pictures of spectacular cars (that I can't afford) and be very entertained.

Cons:

- So this downfall is probably the most talked about but that's because it is the biggest issue. Instagram is laid out in a way that people's self worth can be impacted or even dictated based on the amount of followers and likes that they have. This is an unhealthy mindset that is extremely hard to avoid
- As I just mentioned, Insta is an incredible tool to create your image online and in real life. This also means that Insta is a place for people to show off and make their lives appear to be better than they actually are. Whether that means using filters to make a selfie look perfect or only posting the coolest things that you do, it can create an unrealistic expectation of what life should be. When you are looking at other peoples posts of their apparently perfect lives, it can be frustrating and upsetting when you compare your life to theirs (even though they are probably as normal as you)

How to deal:

- Do your absolute best to find gratification in things other than likes and follows, like passions or activities. Trust me, I'm 17 and I know how hard this is but it is essential. If you find it too hard to ignore how many likes your most recent post is getting, put your phone down for a while and go **do something else** you find rewarding.
- When you're having a crap day and you open your feed just to see how well everyone else (seems) to be doing, it can make you feel even worse about yourself. What I do to help this, other than very simply not looking at it, is try to just enjoy the aesthetics of the picture and ignore whatever it represents. If that's too hard, unfollow. You don't need that kind of negativity in your life.



Snapchat

Pros:

- Gives you a quick, easy and fun way to talk to people, and with streaks and scores can become a real life game. Although it's fun to be a part of that, it can become unhealthy but more on that a few points down.
- Because you are sending pictures AND text, you have the opportunities to use facial cues to express emotions and context that are annoyingly missing on direct messaging platforms. Emojis just don't cut it sometimes.
- Like Instagram, it gives you an opportunity to express yourself and your interests through what you choose to send people and put on your story.

Cons:

- As I mentioned, it can become like a real life game... and that isn't good. I've been there. You're with friends or at a party and you want people to know your social prowess. You casually start snapping making sure people notice how many and how long your streaks are. This is all great until you realise how much of a slave you are to your phone and Snapchat just for a bit of social gratification
- Keeping a streak for the sake of keeping it is just weird. Yea, I've sent a shot of the floor or my left foot just to keep a streak alive but like... it's so unnecessary. I doubt people in the 30's sent blank telegraphs just for the sake of appearing to talk to each other.

How to deal:

- Similar to Instagram, this is one of those cases where you just need to put your phone down for a while. For the past few summers, I have spent a month in Northern Ontario at a leadership camp. For the whole month we are there, we have very limited access to our phones. It takes some getting used to but after a while, doing things like actually striking up a conversation or simply being in the moment become very easy and really fulfilling. Sorry for being preachy but is the truth.
- Like I said, sending snaps for the sake of social gratification is silly. I personally try to have actual conversations with people or nothing at all. If you find yourself just keeping up a streak, try starting a conversation. If this doesn't work, stop talking to that person until they are ready to be interesting.

Conclusion:

- Social media is an amazing tool to connect and express yourself with people. That being said, it can also be extremely controlling. For positive mental health AND physical health, it is essential that we all make an effort to use social media in a more healthy way. Sometimes that might even mean not using it at all.