

Managing Social Media: Let it help, not harm you

Without doubt social media is finding its way into every corner of our lives: it's here to stay whether we like it or not.

When the bells and fireworks were marking the start of 2020, who would have predicted within a few months that our industry would be in almost complete shutdown and we would be taking part in Zoom quizzes and that live BA tech and training sessions would be coming to us via our iPad screens as watched from our gardens or kitchen tables?

The increasing number of social media apps that are available have helped many of us deal with recent events. They have allowed us to connect with family, friends and colleagues, keep up with the news and even share the odd joke... However, most of us would probably admit that every so often it felt like there was just too much social media available and not all of it was helpful.

If you are concerned that social media is taking up too much of your day or more importantly, having a negative effect on your mood or general well-being, there are a few very simple tips to help manage how you feel about your internet usage.

Some of us prefer "do" lists, others prefer "don't" lists. Feel free to pick and choose from the suggestions below and make your own bespoke plan on how to make the best of your time online.

DON'T:

- **Believe everything you see online!** From fake news to people you 'sort of know' leading perfect lives; remind yourself that not all of it is true.
- **Keep apps that you don't need or that leave you feeling worse after you've opened them.** Delete them and move the ones you don't use that often away from the front page.
- **Follow groups or people that don't add value to your day or state of mind.** Have the confidence to delete them; if you really need them then you can rejoin in the future.

DO:

- **Switch off!** Allocate a period when you will not be online. This could be anything from a few minutes each hour to a number of days each week; decide what will work best for you. Put your phone/tablet out of site and reach; a drawer, a different room or even a box! Turn off notifications and lay your device screen side down.
- **Set a limit.** Keep a mental diary one week of time spent online (how much of it made you feel better?). Use this to set a personal maximum and try to stick with it the following week. Be realistic: are you a serial checker or do you like to binge?! How often do you pick up your phone to check the weather and find yourself watching someone turning a wood/resin bowl on a lathe or the top 10 funniest penguin moments an hour or two later?
- **Be aware that bad news travels fast,** good news invariably comes along some time later. There is a good chance that the news wasn't accurate or didn't give the full picture in the first place. Choose your own list of reliable sources and delete or hide the others.
- **Remember why you are online in the first place.** If you are checking eMaestro or sending an email, don't then go on to check Instagram or FaceBook 'just to see if anything has changed'!
- **Something else!** Refer back to your time limit: how much time have you saved? What can you do with this that will make you or someone else feel better? Take some exercise, have a bath, watch something mindless or educational; whatever you choose should be 'guilt free' in your new found me-time!

Hopefully just one of these might be of use. Making just one positive and realistic change to the way you absorb and interact with social media after reading this could make a difference to how you feel.

Other Resources

If you want to read further there are lots of excellent articles, websites and books out there. Here are just a few:

<https://later.com/blog/social-media-mental-health-tips/>

<https://mindhandheart.mit.edu/news/nine-tips-healthy-social-media-use>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>

<https://www.mindwise.org/blog/mental-health/how-to-have-a-healthy-relationship-with-social-media/>

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?](https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?k=social+media+and+mental+health&adgrpid=53918399515&gclid=CjwKCAjwq_D7BRADEiwAVMDdHpKEBOhuoQQ9qqs40-Fhb4Tt5xh5RUvdQmjUQEILFqpR4H5JGRHeeBoCXGcQAvD_BwE&hvadid=259097681678&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=9046133&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=b&hvrnd=15476452587980563839&hvtargid=kw-298665054876&hydadcr=10833_1789926&tag=googhydr-21&ref=pd_sl_8k84h04isb_b)

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There are also some films which you may find interesting. They do concentrate more on the negative aspects of social media so worth keeping the positive uses it has in mind whilst watching:

The Social Dilemma

The Social Network

The Great Hack