

WHEN DOES SOCIAL MEDIA BECOME A PROBLEM?

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO KEEP IT FROM DISRUPTING YOUR LIFE, WRITES MELANIE MCGREGOR



MELANIE MCGREGOR
Column

Even before the pandemic, social media was a major way of communicating.

Now, with in-person connections limited by, it has become one of the key ways we're staying in touch. While there are many pluses to these plat-

forms, there are also some things to watch out for when it comes to mental health.

To be clear, using social media is not a problem. It can be fun, entertaining, and interesting, and also a great distraction that we sometimes really need.

It can also be informative and help us learn skills to care for our health and wellness through things like yoga videos, guided meditations, and podcasts.

The question is when social media use becomes a problem. If using these tools is interfering with and disrupting your regular activities — such as not completing work tasks because you're scrolling your sites or not being able to play an uninterrupted game with your family because you can't stop checking your phone — it could be a concern.



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Don't let social media consume your life, urges Melanie McGregor of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Also worth noting is how you feel after being on social media. If you regularly feel down, anxious, or distressed, it may mean that something needs to change.

So, what are some tips for moderating social me-

dia use and reducing negative impacts? Consider these:

- Delete social media apps from your phone or turn off notifications to make it less likely that you will go on just because it's there or you hear the

"pings" of updates you can't resist checking.

- Limit the time you spend on social media. Designate a time period each day or set a timer. And start small. Don't expect to reduce hours and hours-of-use to next to nothing right away. Cut down gradually.

- Take social media breaks. Whether it's a weekend, a week, or longer, try disconnecting and reaching out to meaningful connections in other ways. And let others know about the break and why you're doing it. You talking about making more time for yourself or spending more time on hobbies might encourage others if they've been considering doing the same.

- Carefully consider who and what to follow. If a social media contact's posts always bring you down, you could either

block their updates or make a point of just scrolling past.

- Use the positives. If you follow encouraging or inspirational contacts, like to spread the word and learn about causes you believe in, and have supportive conversations, go for it. Those are the great things about social media.

Keeping social connections is vital, particularly as the pandemic continues, and as long as you can balance your use of social media with other parts of your life, follow, like, and click away. The magic word is 'balance'.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch, which provides mental health/addiction community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmhahalton on Twitter.



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