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## PROBLEMS OUR TEENS ARE FACING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

**You may have guessed that social media is here to stay. While platforms may change from year to year, the current platforms are addictive to both adults and kids, alike. However, let's look at a few of the more toxic issues our kids are constantly exposed to on social media.**

### 1. Too Much Content.

There is something called the "endless scroll." People become addicted to constantly checking their social media feeds and the companies behind them are constantly posting ads, blogs, photos, questions, and podcasts based on your day-to-day scrolls, views and content for the purpose of keeping you on their platforms. It is literally a part of their business model to keep your attention for as long as they can.

This kind of content overload is causing many young people to be diagnosed with ADHD and similar behavior issues. The brain can go through serious fatigue with the visual stimulation of the real world. When we add social media stimulation, our brains are not getting the rest needed and become so in-turned to social media, that we often "hear" our phones ding even when they are silent?

### 2. Jealousy and Constant Competition

Our daughters follow popular influencers and aspire to have their popularity, money and love and beauty. It is very easy to get sucked into the false realities of photoshopped images and filters. The engulfing of our teens with every scroll is the reason the statistics for depression, loneliness, self-esteem issues and suicides are on the rise. Unfortunately, companies are driven by money more than ethics, so they keep "envy-worthy" bodies and lifestyles in the feeds to make money from those with self-esteem challenges.

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### 3. Cancel Culture

For the last few years, people have been getting called out on past and present behaviors and statements that are not politically or socially acceptable in the eyes of many. In many ways, this is a good thing for issues of rape, racism, violence, etc. because they remove awful people who have held power over vulnerable people.

However, cancel culture is also negatively impacting people as well. Many "cancellations" are found to be incorrect, baseless, and flat out lies but still ruined someone's reputation.

Our teens are so afraid of being "canceled" for not being perfect, they often stop trying to do anything they aren't guaranteed success in. So, they stop speaking their minds. They stop challenging themselves. They stop playing full out. Mistakes are a part of life and growth. However, with the knowledge that any mistake they make can become viral via social media posts, it is vital that we teach our teens that perfection is an illusion. Mistakes are normal and learning from them is how you succeed in life.

### 4. Not enough Fact-checking.

"Fake news" is everywhere and when repeated, people start to believe it is fact. Our youth have a diminished desire to look at past posts and investigate the truth behind what they are reading. In fact, because the algorithms show you more of what you're interested in, they feel they are doing research by stringing together several other posts that have not been fact checked and presenting them as truth.

As parents, we must ask thought provoking questions that create researched answers. "How do you feel about that?" "What would you do differently?" "Where did they get their information from?" "Do they have a degree in that?"

Getting our children to fact-check things even when posted by reputable news sources goes a long way in helping them be independent thinkers.

### 5. Diagnosis Without Experience

Narcissism, depression, autism, etc., are not challenges that can be diagnosed via the internet. These are real issues that must be diagnosed by a professional. Often, our teens believe they have several symptoms from someone else's diagnosis, and they immediately determine, without any professional guidance, they too must have it. Unless it is professionally diagnosed, it is just a label.

It is imperative that we teach our teens they can't diagnose themselves and to come to us regarding any issues they are facing so we can get them the help they need.

Social media is now too integral to our teens to cut it out of their lives all together, however, limiting their access to it and engaging them daily will go a long way to help them build their self-esteem, connect with you more and help keep them safe.