Social Media: Is It Worth It?

Social Media is defined as: “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.”

Social media: unknowingly everyone is engaged in it. Our smart phones are populated with apps such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp all are classed as social media. It is a big deal for all ages and most parents don’t know what sort of things their children are seeing on it. It is a fact of the internet that every click, every view and every sign-up is recorded somewhere.

*Body image and Self-Esteem*

There are 800 million monthly active users on Instagram. Over 95 million photos are uploaded each day. Some of these will be upsetting, distressing and also fake. People photo-shop their photos to make them feel better about themselves.



*http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/videos/TMG10417770/Time-lapse-of-model-being-photoshopped.html*

*Woman being transformed by photo-shop*

As you can see in the photo above, this woman has been changed dramatically, and you can understand why people would feel like they should look the same as this unrealistic image. It’s disgusting that fashion companies don’t think of every individual as beautiful but instead we feel that we should make them look more beautiful just so they can make more money. It is also sad that the customers buy things that the people who have been photo-shopped over photos where they haven’t because we think that we will look ‘as gorgeous’ as the person in the picture in front of us.

There is increasing evidence that the internet and social media can influence suicide-related behaviour. Internet use can cause more exposure to graphic content and lead to cyberbullying, in many cases over the past ten years cyberbullying has led to self-harm and suicide. There are more than 30,000 suicide deaths in the United States and nearly 1 million suicide deaths worldwide occur every year.

*In the news*

There have been many cases of social media affecting children in the news but one of the most recent ones is Mollie Russell. She was effected by social media which then led to her suicide. It hit the headlines and her parents were interviewed about it. Here is a statement her father said, ‘Instagram helped kill my daughter’. This is a very powerful statement, but he believes it is true because they later found out that she had been able to access material linking to anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide. Mollie was found dead in her bedroom in November 2017, although she showed ‘no obvious signs’ of mental health issues. Her father also said, ‘I have no doubt that Instagram helped kill my daughter. She had so much to offer and that’s gone,’ he told the BBC. In a statement he said the family are keen to raise awareness of ‘the harmful and disturbing content’ that is freely available to young people online. Jackie Doyle-Price, minister for suicide prevention announced that the government is trying to reduce suicides by at least 10% by 2020. Because of this, ‘UK could ban social media over suicide images,’ the minister warns.

*https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47019912*

*This is a picture of Mollie Russell.*

*Passcodes and data*

Most people have passwords on their devices so people can’t get into your personal data, but who do you tell when you set one? One of the problems for Mollie Russell (as described above) is that she set passwords on her iPhone and iPod Touch, but didn’t tell anyone the passwords. Now people are trying to access her phone to find any content which may be a cause of her death. The family tried as many passcodes that they could think of to get into it, but this didn’t work. Ian Russell then took it to the Apple store and told them everything and asked them to access it, but they didn’t know how to and they don’t have any way of finding out what the passcodes are. It is very disheartening that such a massive company, such as Apple, are unable to access the content on her phone. They might have the answers to her death and be able to help others. To prevent this from happening, we would always recommend checking what the password is for your child’s devices and accessing their accounts regularly to look for any distressing content.

*Social media statistics*

* The internet has 4.2 billion users. A very high proportion of this will have seen or accessed some harmful or distressing content.
* The average time spent on social media is 116 minutes a day. That is a very long time, when you work out that there are 1440 minutes in a day, 480 of those you will be sleeping, 360 of those you will be at school, 116 minutes on social media. This leaves 484 minutes to do other things such as after-school activities *(for an average school person).*

*What can we do about it?*

This all seems very biased against social media, but that’s not what we mean. We want everyone to be aware of what social media can take control of and how it effects children as well as adults. It has its good and bad sides but the vast majority of use it and it plays a big role in lives now. We would just like to recommend that you tell a trusted person your passwords, don’t take what you see on social media too seriously and if you see anything that upsets you, report it. Don’t worry about reporting something, it is completely worth it and if it upsets you, then it will definitely upset someone else too. If you are a child, tell a parent or guardian what you are accessing and let them do checks on what you are doing. Also, trust them, if they don’t want you to have some form of social media then trust them. They are just worried about you and they want to keep you safe.