Practicing Wellness

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"*STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY IN TODAY'S SOCIAL MEDIA USE*"

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Are you finding yourself unable to sleep at night because you're spending too much time online or on social media? Does your phone and/or the internet consume you and your mental health/well-being? Research studies prove that an increased use of social media is responsible for a growing mental health problem across the United States. There is no denying, social media has become part of our daily activity. However, the high demand of its use and lapse of time can have a negative effect on some individuals. For example, loss of true connection, social isolation, enhanced anxiety, and the focus on a misrepresentation of reality can consume individuals that are addicted to the internet and social media. So, what can we do as Public Health Service Officers to help remedy this within ourselves?

Here are some helpful tips:

- Enforce some guidelines & boundaries for yourself and/or children when online.
- Be mindful & pay attention to how you feel when on certain social networks.
- Disable social media notifications (this will help you focus & regain control of your time).
- Set your phone on silent and/or do not disturb during bedtime and when you are spending time with your family.
- Schedule some periodic breaks (or even a fast) from social media (i.e., one hour to a full day or even longer; make it a game/challenge within yourself or with others to see who can go the longest).
- Be intentional, set your phone down or away & interact with others; strike up a conversation when out in public to purposely look away from your phone
- Step away entirely & engage in another activity you enjoy (i.e., read a book or magazine, go for a walk, meditate, journal, etc.).
- Reconnect with others face-to-face by volunteering within your community, church, and/or even an animal shelter; this will help you take your mind off of being on your phone.
- Go old-fashion and play a board game or another fun activity with your family instead of being on your phone.
- Unfollow, mute and/or hide accounts (or even a person) that may cause you to feel negative emotions such as guilt, shame, jealousy, heightened anxiety, or not feeling good enough. This is not a good space for you to be in and not seeing it or being socially connected to these accounts could help you feel free from these destructive feelings.
- Instead draw on a social network that provides you support, a safe space to communicate and is a positive connection.

These valuable guidelines are health-related positive outcomes to improve our social well-being, positive mental health and self-related guided health.

Bekalu, M., McCloud, R. F., & Viswanath, K. (2019). Association of social media use with social well-being, positive mental health, and self-rated health. *Health Education & Behavior, 46*(2_suppl), 69S–80S. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198119863768