



**Science Behind the Story (SBS)**  
**Social Media: Be Real & Be Healthy (🌈 A Social Health Story)**  
**(5<sup>th</sup> Grade – 10-11 yrs)**

This story describes how social media can have both positive and negative effects on your social health.

🌈 When social media is used as tool to enhance our social networks, it is beneficial.

Social media is a tool that was originally developed to help people share their thoughts, ideas and information with one another using computers, tablets and cell phones (Ahmed, 2019). A tool is something that humans developed to help us with a particular behavior.

When we use social media to connect with other people, like family and friends that do not live next to us, then social media can be beneficial. You can share things with people who are far away or that you do not see all the time. We know that our family and friends are a source of support and being able to communicate with people in our support system is good for our social health (Malik, 2022).

When we use social media to get information from reputable sources, that can be good for our cognitive health as well as our social health. Children and adolescents can now get information that they would not have had access to prior to these digital formats (Reid Chassiakos, 2016; Anderson, 2019). Social media has been shown to enhance our academic performance (El-Badawy, 2015) and doing well academically is good for our self-esteem (ref).

Social media can also be used for entertainment. There are numerous formats, such as videos, apps and games, that allow children to engage in content (Reid Chassiakos, 2016).

As with most things in life, using social media platforms in moderation is also key to their beneficial effects (Orben, 2020; Firth, 2017).

🌈 When social media is used to compare yourself to others or you are using it to build your self-esteem, then it can be harmful.

Social media, used as a tool, can also produce a lot of negative consequences. Social media may actually cause you to start believing false information to be true, you may start interacting in a negative way with other people, and you may be coerced into making bad decisions. All of these behaviors can result in your use of social media being detrimental to your social health.


In some cases, you may start believing information that is not true. This stems from the fact that you do not always know whether the content you are seeing on social media is real or true, “fake news” (Shu, 2017). You may become prey to clickbait – which is content that is presented in a way to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a particular link (Shu, 2017). The more you click on these sites, the

more cites which are similar are presented to you. Soon you are only getting information which reinforces content which supports one viewpoint, which may not be real or true.

Plus, it is easy to forget when you have the anonymity of social media that your actions, and the actions of others have consequences. Cyberbullying can occur, in some cases amongst people who would never consider themselves to be bullies (Hamm, 2015; Richards, 2015).

In a number of cases, social media has been used to “challenge” or “dare” people to do things that may actually be hazardous to your health (Kriegel, 2021).

These are only a few ways in which social media can negatively affect your social health (Richards, 2015).

 When you keep your virtual “self” congruent with your real life “self” then social media can be helpful – otherwise, it can be very damaging to your sense of self and self-esteem.

Central to Carl Rogers (1959) theory of personality is the notion of the sense of self and self-actualization (Koch, 1959). According to Rogers, we want to feel, experience, and behave in ways which are consistent with our self-image and which reflect what we would like to be like, our ideal-self. The closer our self-image and ideal-self are to each other, the more consistent or congruent we are and the higher our sense of self-worth. For Rogers, self-actualization occurs when a person’s “ideal self” (i.e. who they would like to be) is congruent with their actual behavior (self-image). Rogers describes an individual who is actualizing as a fully functioning person. The main determinant of whether we will become self-actualized is childhood experience.

Roger’s ideas have merit, especially when you consider the “self” that one portrays on social media platforms. It is well known that when someone acts, looks, or says things on social media that do not match the way that they like to act, look, or think, then those people do not have very good self-esteem and they do not feel good about themselves (Schlegel, 2011). This means that using social media can have differential effects on different people (Cingel, 2022). If the difference between your virtual self and your real self is small, then social media can be beneficial to your sense of self and self-esteem, but if the difference between your virtual self and your real self is large, then social media can be detrimental to your sense of self and self-esteem.

## **National Standards:**

### **Next Generation Science Standards**

- Crosscutting Concepts
  - **Patterns:** Observed patterns in nature guide organization and classification and prompt questions about relationships and causes underlying them.
    - Similarities and differences in patterns can be used to sort, classify, communicate and analyze simple rates of change for natural phenomena and designed products.
    - Patterns of change can be used to make predictions
    - Patterns can be used as evidence to support an explanation.
  - **Cause & Effect:** Events have causes, sometimes simple, sometimes multifaceted. Deciphering causal relationships, and the mechanisms by which they are mediated, is a major activity of science and engineering.
    - Cause and effect relationships are routinely identified, tested, and used to explain change.
    - Events that occur together with regularity might or might not be a cause and effect relationship.
  - **Stability & Change:** For both designed and natural systems, conditions that affect stability and factors that control rates of change are critical elements to consider and understand.

- Change is measured in terms of differences over time and may occur at different rates.
- Some systems appear stable, but over long periods of time will eventually change.

## **ASCA (American School Counselors Association):**

### **Personal/Social Development**

- **Standard A:** Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.
  - PS:A1 Acquire Self-knowledge
    - PS:A1.1 Develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person
    - PS:A1.2 Identify values, attitudes and beliefs
    - PS:A1.4 Understand change is a part of growth
    - PS:A1.5 Identify and express feelings
    - PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior
    - PS:A1.7 Recognize personal boundaries, rights and privacy needs
    - PS:A1.8 Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it
    - PS:A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills
      - PS:A2.6 Use effective communications skills
      - PS:A2.7 Know that communication involves speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior
      - PS:A2.8 Learn how to make and keep friends
- **Standard B:** Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.
  - PS:B1 Self-knowledge Application
    - PS:B1.8 Know when peer pressure is influencing a decision
- **Standard C:** Students will understand safety and survival skills.
  - PS:C1 Acquire Personal Safety Skills
    - PS:C1.7 Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills to make safe and healthy choices
    - PS:C1.9 Learn how to cope with peer pressure

## **National Health Education Standards (Shape America) & CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)**

- **Standard 1:** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
  - 1.5.1: Describe the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health. **(CDC)**
  - 1.5.2: Identify examples of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health. **(CDC)**
- **Standard 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
  - 2.5.2: Identify the influence of culture on health practices and behaviors. **(CDC)**
  - 2.5.3: Identify how peers can influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors. **(CDC)**
  - 2.5.5: Explain how media influences thoughts, feelings, and health behaviors. **(CDC)**
  - 2.5.6: Describe ways that technology can influence personal health. **(CDC)**
- **Standard 4:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
  - 4.5.1: Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health. **(CDC)**
  - 4.5.2: Demonstrate refusal skills that avoid or reduce health risks. **(CDC)**
  - 4.5.4: Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance personal health. **(CDC)**
- **Standard 5:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
  - 5.5.1: Identify health-related situations that might require a thoughtful decision. **(CDC)**
  - 5.5.2: Analyze when assistance is needed in making a health-related decision. **(CDC)**
  - 5.5.3: List healthy options to health-related issues or problems. **(CDC)**
  - 5.5.5: Choose a healthy option when making a decision. **(CDC)**
  - 5.5.6: Describe the outcomes of a health-related decision. **(CDC)**
- **Standard 7:** Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

- 7.5.1: Identify responsible personal health behaviors. **(CDC)**
- 7.5.2: Demonstrate a variety of healthy practices and behaviors to maintain or improve personal health. **(CDC)**
- 7.5.3: Demonstrate a variety of behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks. **(CDC)**

## **References:**

- Ahmed, Y. A., Ahmad, M. N., Ahmad, N., & Zakaria, N. H. (2019). Social media for knowledge-sharing: A systematic literature review. *Telematics and informatics*, 37, 72-112.
- Anderson, T. (2019). Challenges and opportunities for use of social media in Higher education. *Journal of learning for development*, 6(1), 6-19.
- Cingel, D. P., Carter, M. C., & Krause, H. V. (2022). Social media and self-esteem. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 101304.
- El-Badawy, T. A., & Hashem, Y. (2015). The impact of social media on the academic development of school students. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 6(1), 46.
- Frith, E. (2017). Social media and children's mental health: A review of the evidence. ([http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Social-Media\\_Mental-Health\\_EPI-Report.pdf](http://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Social-Media_Mental-Health_EPI-Report.pdf))
- Hamm, M. P., et al. (2015). Prevalence and effect of cyberbullying on children and young people: A scoping review of social media studies. *JAMA pediatrics*, 169(8), 770-777.
- Koch, S. (Ed.). (1959). *Psychology: a study of a science*. McGraw-Hill.
- Kriegel, E. R., Lazarevic, B., Athanasian, C. E., & Milanaik, R. L. (2021). TikTok, Tide Pods and Tiger King: health implications of trends taking over pediatric populations. *Current opinion in pediatrics*, 33(1), 170-177.
- Malik F, Marwaha R. Developmental Stages of Social Emotional Development In Children. 2022 Sep 18. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2022 Jan-. PMID: 30521240.
- Orben, A. (2020). Teenagers, screens and social media: a narrative review of reviews and key studies. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 55(4), 407-414.
- Reid Chassiakos, Y. L., et al. (2016). Children and adolescents and digital media. *Pediatrics*, 138(5).
- Richards, D., Caldwell, P. H., & Go, H. (2015). Impact of social media on the health of children and young people. *Journal of paediatrics and child health*, 51(12), 1152-1157.
- Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. A. (2011). The true self and psychological health: Emerging evidence and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(12), 989-1003.
- Shu, K., Sliva, A., Wang, S., Tang, J., & Liu, H. (2017). Fake news detection on social media: A data mining perspective. *ACM SIGKDD explorations newsletter*, 19(1), 22-36.

Steinsbekk, S., Wichstrøm, L., Stenseng, F., Nesi, J., Hygen, B. W., & Skalická, V. (2021). The impact of social media use on appearance self-esteem from childhood to adolescence—A 3-wave community study. *Computers in Human Behavior, 114*, 106528.