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Social Media Obsession & Anxiety

Do you get anxious when you cannot check your Facebook or Twitter account? Believe it or not, that is a real disorder. Social media anxiety disorder is a mental health condition that is similar to social anxiety disorder. In fact, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders in the United States. It seems that the more technology we acquire, the more stressed out we become. According to the experts, almost 20% of people with social media accounts cannot go more than three hours without checking them. So, what is social media anxiety disorder?

Most people who have social media accounts do not get nervous or stressed out when they are not able to check their notifications every five minutes. However, for those who have social media anxiety disorder, just being away from their Facebook or Twitter account for a few minutes can cause severe anxiety. Here are some of the most common symptoms of social media anxiety disorder:

- Interrupting conversations to check your social media accounts
- Lying to others about how much time you spend on social media
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Trying to stop or reduce your use of social media more than once before without being successful
- Loss of interest in other activities
- Neglecting work or school to comment on Facebook or Twitter account
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when you are not able to access social media
- Spending over six hours per day on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram
- Overwhelming need to share things with others on social media sites
- Having your phone with you 24 hours a day to check your social media sites
- Using social media more often than you planned
- Severe nervousness or anxiety when you are not able to check your notifications
- Negative impacts in your personal or professional life due to social media usage

Overall, about 30% of those who use social media spend more than 15 hours per week online. This can greatly reduce your ability to enjoy real life. It can also cost you relationships, jobs, and an education if you spend too much time online. If you are spending several hours a day on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, you are not going to have enough time to work, study, or spend time with loved ones. You may have social media anxiety disorder and it can also affect your health, both physically and mentally.

Physical Risks of Social Media Addiction

Spending too much time online has been proven to cause illnesses such as eye strain, neck pain, and lower back problems. In addition, the sedentary way we sit around and “talk” to people on Facebook can cause physical illnesses such as obesity, heart disease, nutrition problems, and a risk of stroke and certain kinds of cancers.

Mental Health Issues Caused by Social Media Addiction

Researchers have found that using social media obsessively causes more than just anxiety. In fact, testing has found that using too much internet can cause depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), impulsive disorder, problems with mental functioning, paranoia, and loneliness. It is more than just the pressure of sharing things with others, it is also about how you may be comparing your life with others you see on Facebook. Many people see that someone on Facebook who has a great job, excellent husband, and beautiful home and they feel happy for them. But, others can feel jealous, depressed, or may even feel suicidal about their own life if it is not as “perfect” as those they see on Facebook.

What You Can Do

First of all, just realize that many people who post all that great stuff on Facebook have a normal life just like you and me but they only put the good stuff on Facebook. If your life is not as awesome as some of the people you see on Facebook, it is not going to get any better by sitting there obsessing over it. You have to get out and enjoy your real life, not your social media “life” because that is not a real life. If you are having trouble doing this or you just need to talk to someone, there are people who can help you with this. You do not have to have an appointment or even leave your home to do it. Talk to an online therapist or counselor now and you can feel better by tomorrow.

About the Author

Sarah Fader is the CEO and Founder of Stigma Fighters, a nonprofit organization that encourages individuals with mental illness to share their personal stories. She has been featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Atlantic, Quartz, Psychology Today, The Huffington Post, HuffPost Live, and Good Day New York.

Sarah is a native New Yorker who enjoys naps, talking to strangers, and caring for her two small humans and two average-sized cats. Like six million other Americans, Sarah lives with panic disorder. Through Stigma Fighters, Sarah hopes to change the world, one mental health stigma at a time.

Source: Fader, S. (2018). Social media obsession and anxiety. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) website: <https://adaa.org/>

Bring Your Work and Life Into Balance

Most people don't know how to balance work in relationship to other areas of their life, often described as work-life balance. Hectic work schedules, increased responsibility, new technology, and the need to read and respond to growing quantities of e-mail and voicemail are just some of the things that place huge demands on your work life. This pressure may cause you to feel as if your work is a prison that you can never escape as more and more keeps coming at you.

Many of us work in environments that have management's hands-on involvement. Work comes from a lot of different sources and you might be supporting many different people. You're pulled in various directions without knowing why or understanding how to cope with expectations from multiple people. It's a lot to handle and it may seem impossible to bring your work and life into balance.

Whether you've been promoted or are just trying to cope with the relentless pressures of the modern work environment, learning new ways to handle it all will help you achieve that important balance. The place to start is with yourself and the way you think about the demands on you. Below are four ideas to help you bring your work and life into balance by changing your attitudes about what you can, and should, accomplish at work.

- 1. Do not please everyone.** The underlying goal of many executives is to please everyone in an effort to be perceived as doing a good job. This desire, along with overcompensation, causes you to be ineffective in work-life balance and managing your time effectively. People who are really good at pleasing everyone don't say no to anything being given to them. They don't want to be critical or to challenge a paradigm that is being presented by either a boss or superior. What happens is that they become stuck in a place where they say yes to everything without giving consideration to what is most important or what is the best use of their time. If you try to please everyone, the one person who doesn't get pleased is you! You can't be placed second while someone else at work is always placed first. Instead, take care of yourself first and foremost.

2. **Be true to yourself.** Many executives think they get respect from others inside the company by how much they do and how well they do it. However, a very important determiner of respect is integrity, and integrity requires being true to yourself. To do that, you must know what your truth is. What is yours? When you have too great a workload, isn't your truth to try and rebalance it? When you have too many things going on and too many projects, isn't it your job to delegate more? There is a truth that always exists within your work life: the need to do what is right for you, not what is right for the company. Yes, you must often do what the company wants you to do, but not to such a degree that you get lost within that paradigm. It's important to know your truth and be able to take a stand on what you need to do to be true to yourself.
3. **Set high boundaries.** In order to set high boundaries, you need to know what you are willing to say yes to and what you are willing to say no to in the areas of work-life balance. For example, have you set boundaries that you will not work past a certain time, not get to the office before a certain time, and take time for lunch every day? Do you know what your boundaries are so that when you get a huge project, you won't allow your boundaries to evaporate because of the demands of the project? Setting boundaries will help you have a work-life balance that provides you enjoyment, peace, and fulfillment in all aspects of your life.

When you feel a great amount of stress and burden from the demands of your work, it's almost impossible to make time for what you most need or want in your life. This is why having and setting boundaries is so vitally important. If you keep your boundaries strong, they will protect you and take care of you no matter how difficult, troubling, or challenging your work can become.

4. **Set realistic and lower expectations with yourself.** Set realistic expectations with yourself that allow for underpromising. What is underpromising? It's allowing yourself to do less than you think you can do. If you think it will take 1.5 hours to do something, give yourself 2 hours. Do the following:

Step 1—Give yourself increased time frames to get things done.

Step 2—Increase the amount of gentleness and compassion you have for how much you need to get things done.

Step 3—Increase your expectations of yourself so you have more room to fail and more room to succeed.

You'll be less inclined to beat yourself up when you have underpromising expectations. Most people say they underpromise, but do exactly the opposite by giving themselves very high expectations. For example, if they think they have an hour to get something done, they give themselves 40 minutes. This puts extra pressure on them. Many executives create such high expectations that they rarely accomplish what needs to get done.

Practice these four suggestions and you'll soon see a decrease in your stress level and an increase in the quality of your work.

About the Author

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Joel Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 coaches in the U.S., and the author of 7 books, including *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. He has worked with many of the world's leading companies, including Google, Deloitte, Amazon, Ritz-Carlton, Gap, Cisco, Oracle, and many more. Visit Joel online at Garfinkle Executive Coaching. Subscribe to his Fulfillment@Work Newsletter and receive the free e-book, *40 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!*

Source: Garfinkle, J. (n.d.). *Bring your work and life into balance*. Retrieved January 11, 2019, from <https://www.garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/>

National Mental Health Awareness Month

May 2021

May is a time to raise awareness of those living with mental or behavioral health issues and to help reduce the stigma so many experience. Call your EAP 24/7/365 for free confidential assistance.

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes your emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how you think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how you handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common, but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better, and many recover completely.

Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Mental Health and Wellness

Positive mental health allows people to realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life, work productively, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Ways to maintain positive mental health include

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Connecting with others
- Staying positive
- Getting physically active
- Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, MentalHealth.gov. (Updated 2017, August 29). What is mental health? Retrieved March 15, 2018 from <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/>

Create a Budget and Stick with it

Making and sticking to a budget is a key step toward getting a handle on your debt and working toward a savings goal—of any kind. Let's say you want to set money aside for emergencies or you aspire to save up for a much larger goal like a car, down payment on a house, or retirement. Until you get a realistic picture of how much money you're bringing in and where it's going, it's difficult to know whether you'll have enough left over to put away.

Getting started can be the hardest part, especially if your finances feel out of control, but these easy-to-follow steps are designed to help you create a budget that really works for you:

- **Step 1:** Where does my money come from? The first place to start is getting a complete picture of where your money comes from. You may be self-employed, have multiple jobs, or receive child support or government benefits—all of these sources should factor into what you have available to make ends meet. Start by recording all of your income with this Income Tracker: https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_income_benefits_tool_2018-11_ADA.pdf
- **Step 2:** Where does my money go? Equally important but the heaviest lift is logging your spending, so you get a realistic picture of what your money, on an average month, is going to. This Spending Tracker helps you both log and sort your spending by categories like utilities and housing to eating out and entertainment: https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_well-being_spending-tracker.pdf. If this feels overwhelming, start small and look at your expenses one week at a time by either reviewing your receipts or checking account. You could also start a daily log of your expenses so you're making sure to capture those small expenses—like buying breakfast or lunch instead of bringing it with you—that add up over time.
- **Step 3:** What are all my bills, and when are they due? If you're coming up short at the end of the month, it could be that the timing for your bills and income don't match. This Bill Calendar is designed to help you remember when your bills are due, but also keep in mind weeks when you need to be careful about your spending: https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_bill_calendar_tool_2018-11_ADA.pdf. Missing payments or not paying on time can also have larger impacts on your credit scores and overall financial wellbeing.
- **Step 4:** Create your working budget. Once you've identified all of your income sources and started tracking your spending and when your bills are due, this Budget Worksheet pulls everything together so you have a working and realistic budget: https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_well-being_monthly-budget.pdf.

Creating a budget will help you figure out if you have enough money to cover your expenses, while also having enough to save or spend on something extra you may want for yourself or your family. Be sure to update your budget if you experience a change in employment or your spending habits.

Sticking to a Budget

Changing your money habits won't happen overnight. Making—and sticking—with a budget takes effort, but here are a few important tips for being successful:

- **Create a tool that works for you.** Be realistic and start looking at your finances one month at a time. Create a way that's easy for you to track income and spending in real time, whether that's a daily journal or putting receipts in a folder that you review at the end of each week.
- **Analyze your spending habits.** This is an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at your spending, and it is also the easiest way to look for areas where you can cut back. If you know you're prone to impulse spending, create a plan that's doable to help you limit that spending. Track your spending with this easy tool: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/track-your-spending-with-this-easy-tool>.

- **Set a goal.** Whether it's small or large, it's helpful to have an end goal and something you're working towards. Use this worksheet to help: https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_SMART-goals_tool_2018-11.pdf. Also, rewarding yourself, even in small ways, can help you keep up with any progress you've made.
- **Develop a support system.** Like sticking to an exercise routine, it's easier when you're surrounded by families and friends you can trust to offer you support, either by doing a budget with you or listening when you're struggling.

Take control of your finances.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) created Get a Handle on Debt Boot Camp to make money management easy by delivering tools and strategies directly to your inbox. Sign up today to start managing your debt by budgeting smarter, paying your bills on time, tracking your spending, paying down existing debts, and earning extra income: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/debt-collection/get-handle-debt-boot-camp>.

Source: Dantus, C. (2019, June 5). Budgeting: How to create a budget and stick with it. Retrieved December 8, 2020, from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB): <https://www.consumerfinance.gov>