



How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media



Jamie Benner

Over 70% of American adults use social media to keep up with family and friends, get news and information, and even meet new people.

Yet while social media has many benefits, using it excessively may lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness.

“Social media emphasizes interaction and makes it easy to compare ourselves with others,” explained Jamie Benner, Program Manager for Salem Regional Medical Center’s (SRMC) Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center. “Constantly making comparisons to the accomplishments or appearances of other people can lower self-esteem and contribute to a fear of missing out, which is the perception that other people are leading more fun and fulfilling lives.”

She continued, “It’s also easy to fall into a pattern of endlessly scrolling through social media feeds filled with negative or stressful news. This can cause us to feel overwhelmed and increase anxiety levels.”

While everyone’s experience with social media is unique, Benner says that it is important to recognize the warning signs of unhealthy social media behavior.

“If your social media use is impacting your relationships, distracting you from work or school, or affecting your mental health, you may need to set some boundaries,” she advised.

Tips for Healthy Social Media Use:

- Track your screen time and set limits
- Take breaks
- Follow people and pages that make you happy
- Disable social media notifications
- Remove social media apps from your phone
- Leave your phone out of reach while sleeping

It is normal to feel unhappy from time to time, but some symptoms may indicate a more significant anxiety or depressive disorder.

“If despite your best efforts you feel persistently anxious, sad or hopeless, have trouble sleeping, or are unable to face your normal daily activities; you should talk to your doctor or a trained mental health professional to discuss the treatment options available,” Benner said. “Those experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm should seek help immediately.”

About SRMC’s Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center

SRMC’s Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center (BMWC) offers intensive outpatient programs for adults facing a range of mental health conditions, including depression; anxiety; mood changes; and grief, loss and trauma. The BMWC is located at 2020 East State Street, Suite J, in Salem, 330-337-4935.