

An Ounce of Prevention

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More Time Online Tied to Loneliness in Young Adults

A new report suggests the more time a young adult uses social media, the more likely they are to feel socially isolated.

In a national analysis, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPMC) scientists also found that in addition to the time spent online, the frequency of use was associated with increased social isolation.

The finding contradicts the belief that social media help to reduce social isolation among young adults. That is, social media is not a true panacea to help reduce perceived social isolation when a person lacks a sense of social belonging, true engagement with others and fulfilling relationships.

“We do not yet know which came first — the social media use or the perceived social isolation,” said senior author Elizabeth Miller, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pediatrics at Pitt and chief of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

“It’s possible that young adults who initially felt socially isolated turned to social media. Or it could be that their increased use of social media somehow led to feeling isolated from the real world. It also could be a combination of both. But even if the social isolation came first, it did not seem to be alleviated by spending time online, even in purportedly social situations.”

In the past, social isolation has been independently associated with an increased risk for mortality.

“This is an important issue to study because mental health problems and social isolation are at epidemic levels among young adults,” said lead author Brian A. Primack, M.D., Ph.D., director of Pitt’s Center for Research on Media, Technology and Health.

“We are inherently social creatures, but modern life tends to compartmentalize us instead of bringing us together. While it may seem that social media presents opportunities to fill that social void, I think this study suggests that it may not be the solution people were hoping for.”

In 2014, Primack and his colleagues sampled 1,787 U.S. adults ages 19 through 32, using questionnaires to determine time and frequency of social media use by asking about the 11 most popular social media platforms. Media platforms included Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google Plus, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Tumblr, Pinterest, Vine, and LinkedIn.

The scientists measured participants’ perceived social isolation using a validated assessment tool called the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System.

Even when the researchers controlled for a variety of social and demographic factors, participants who used social media more than two hours a day had twice the odds for perceived social isolation than their peers who spent less than half an hour on social media each day.

And participants who visited various social media platforms 58 or more times per week had about triple the odds of perceived social isolation than those who visited fewer than nine times per week.

The researchers have several theories for how increased use of social media could fuel feelings of social isolation, including:

- social media use displaces more authentic social experiences because the more time a person spends online, the less time there is for real-world interactions;
- certain characteristics of social media facilitate feelings of being excluded, such as when one sees photos of friends having fun at an event to which they were not invited;
- exposure to highly idealized representations of peers’ lives on social media sites may elicit feelings of envy and the distorted belief that others lead happier and more successful lives.

Primack, a family medicine physician, and Miller, a pediatrician, both encourage doctors to ask patients about their social media use and counsel them in reducing that use if it seems linked to

symptoms of social isolation. However, they noted, much more study is needed to understand nuances around social media use.

“People interact with each other over social media in many different ways,” said Primack, also a professor of medicine, pediatrics, and clinical and translational science at Pitt.

“In a large population-based study such as this, we report overall tendencies that may or may not apply to each individual. I don’t doubt that some people using certain platforms in specific ways may find comfort and social connectedness via social media relationships. However, the results of this study simply remind us that, on the whole, use of social media tends to be associated with increased social isolation and not decreased social isolation.”

~By Rick Nauert PhD

https://psychcentral.com/news/2017/03/07/more-time-online-tied-to-loneliness-in-young-adults/117294.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=hot-topics

Motivation Can Fluctuate Widely in Short Period of Time

Internal motivation is a key factor in accomplishing just about anything, from daily tasks to lifetime goals and dreams. But why do we seem to have a surplus of motivation one day, while on other days we can barely muster the energy to get off the couch?

A new study, published in the journal *Learning & Instruction*, suggests a strong two-way link between motivation and effort — the more effort one makes, the more motivated one feels, and vice versa. The findings also show that study participants experienced extreme fluctuations in motivation, from feeling highly motivated to extremely unmotivated, within the short time frame of an hour and a half.

“It is known that motivation is an important factor for learning and performance, but research has so far been relatively general,” said researcher Dr. Julia Dietrich, a psychologist at Friedrich Schiller University Jena in Germany. To date, studies have primarily recorded how motivated people are in general and what drives them.

“However, until now no one has studied the state of an individual’s motivation in a specific, time-limited situation, such as during a lecture or lesson at school,” she said.

For the study, 155 student teachers were asked to record their motivation three times within 90-minute lectures throughout one semester.

"To do this they had to answer questions, which were always the same, during 10 lectures on Educational Psychology, either using their smartphone or on paper. Among other things, we wanted to know how competent they felt at that particular moment, whether they understood the material or found it a strain to follow the lecture. They were also asked whether they enjoyed the content of the lecture and whether they found it useful," said Dietrich.

The results were surprising. The researchers found that motivation fluctuated much more strongly during the 90 minutes than they had previously assumed. During a lecture, every single participant experienced phases of high motivation and of strong demotivation, completely independently of the other students in relation to the timing of those phases.

"Interests are of course specific to individuals. So far, at any rate, we have been unable to detect any systematic trends such as particular materials or topics that caused motivation to rise or fall in all participants," said Dietrich. "The causes for the fluctuations need to be considered more carefully in future, in order to make learning contexts as a whole more motivating."

The study was also able to show the close two-way link between motivation and effort. The more effort one makes, the more motivated one feels. The reverse is also true: "A person who is motivated also makes more effort," said Dietrich.

According to Dietrich, the important thing to remember is that every learning situation and every moment counts; lecturers can "lose" students at any point during class, but they can also win them back again.

Dietrich will be doing further research on the "dark side" of motivation. "There are people who are very motivated and perform very well, but find it a great effort. Investigating what it 'costs' them to study, so that they are not at risk of burnout at some time, will be the aim of our future studies," she said.

~ By Traci Pedersen

https://psychcentral.com/news/2017/03/07/motivation-can-fluctuate-widely-in-short-period-of-time/117284.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=hot-topics

Healthy Sex Life at Home May Boost Job Performance, Satisfaction

New research suggests that maintaining a healthy sex life at home boosts employees' job satisfaction and engagement at the office.

Oregon State University researchers believe their finding emphasizes the value of a strong work-life balance.

In the study of work and sex habits of married employees, investigators found that those who prioritized sex at home unknowingly gave themselves a next-day advantage at work.

Researchers discovered a "day after" effect, where individuals were more likely to immerse themselves in their tasks and enjoy their work lives.

"We make jokes about people having a 'spring in their step,' but it turns out this is actually a real thing and we should pay attention to it," said Keith Leavitt, Ph.D., an expert in organizational behavior and management.

"Maintaining a healthy relationship that includes a healthy sex life will help employees stay happy and engaged in their work, which benefits the employees and the organizations they work for."

The study also showed that bringing work-related stress home from the office negatively impinges on employees' sex lives.

In an era when smart phones are prevalent and after-hours responses to work emails are often expected, the findings

highlight the importance of leaving work at the office, Leavitt said.

When work carries so far into an employee's personal life that they sacrifice things like sex, their engagement in work can decline.

The researchers' findings appear in the *Journal of Management*. Co-authors are Dr. Christopher Barnes and Trevor Watkins of the University of Washington and Dr. David Wagner of the University of Oregon.

Sexual intercourse triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with the reward centers in the brain, as well as oxytocin, a neuropeptide associated with social bonding and attachment. That makes sex a natural and relatively automatic mood elevator and the benefits extend well into the next day, Leavitt said.

To understand the impact of sex on work, the researchers followed 159 married employees over the course of two weeks, asking them to complete two brief surveys each day.

They found that employees who engaged in sex reported more positive moods the next day, and the elevated mood levels in the morning led to more sustained work engagement and job satisfaction throughout the workday.

The effect, which appears to linger for at least 24 hours, was equally strong for both men and women and was present even after researchers took into account marital satisfaction and sleep quality, which are two common predictors of daily mood.

"This is a reminder that sex has social, emotional, and physiological benefits, and it's important to make it a priority," Leavitt said. "Just make time for it."

Twenty years ago, monitoring sleep or daily step counts or actively practicing mindful meditation might have seemed odd, he said, but now they are all things people practice as part of efforts to lead healthier, more productive lives. It may be time to rethink sex and its benefits as well, Leavitt said.

"Making a more intentional effort to maintain a healthy sex life should be considered an issue of human sustainability, and as a result, a potential career advantage," he said.

U.S. employers probably won't follow the lead of a town councilman in Sweden who recently proposed that local municipal employees be allowed to use an hour of their work week for sex. The councilman's hope is to boost the town's declining population as well as improve employee moods and productivity.

But employers here can steer their employee engagement efforts more broadly toward work-life balance policies that encourage workers to disconnect from the office, Leavitt said. The French recently enacted a law that bars after-hours email and gives employees a "right to disconnect."

"Technology offers a temptation to stay plugged in, but it's probably better to unplug if you can," he said.

"And employers should encourage their employees to completely disengage from work after hours."

~ By Rick Nauert PhD

https://psychcentral.com/news/2017/03/07/healthy-sex-life-at-home-may-boost-job-performance-satisfaction/117299.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=hot-topics

Self- Help Corner:

Alcoholics Anonymous:	780-424-5900
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org	
Al-Anon/Alateen:	780-433-1818
Support Network / Referral Line:	211
Distress Line:	780-482-4357
Cocaine Anonymous:	780-425-2715

Informative Links:

The National Women's Health Information Center:
<http://4woman.gov>