

# 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=L&li\\_medium=hot-topics](https://psychcentral.com/news/2017/03/07/more-time-online-tied-to-loneliness-in-young-adults/117294.html?li_source=L&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](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)

## Enhance Your Memory

Use these strategies to compensate for mild memory loss.

Psychologists are finding strategies to help people adapt to memory problems, including:

- **Take mental snapshots.** Good memory is actually good learning, say rehabilitation experts. That means forming a strong association with new information as you learn it.

Systematically take note of things. When you put down your keys, for instance, take a mental snapshot of them lying next to the fruit bowl on the kitchen table.

- **Train your brain to remember.** People in the early stages of memory loss can benefit from simple memory training, research suggests.

To learn a new name, for example, use "mnemonic devices" that link the new information with familiar information. If you meet someone named "Mr. Brown," picture him drenched in that color as you're introduced.

Another training technique is one called "vanishing cues." If you can't remember a name, write down any letters of it that you can remember. Then fill in more and more until your recall kicks in. This training works by bypassing the faulty areas of the brain. Instead, you're training new areas of the brain to take over.

- **Take advantage of technology.** A paging system, for example, can help people remember appointments or other important dates. And a specially programmed personal digital assistant can help guide users through complex tasks.

Technology does have its limits, of course. For one thing, you have to remember how to use it or even that it's there for you to use in the first place.

- **Keep your spirits up.** Memory problems can affect mood. Exercise and mentally stimulating activities can help.

Adapted from "[Mending memory](#)" APA Monitor on Psychology

<http://www.apa.org/topics/learning/enhance-memory.aspx>

## Watching Parents Fight May Fuel Later Mental Health Problems

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) May 27 - Research shows that children who grow up in homes where parents are violent towards each other are at increased risk of depression, conduct disorder, and alcohol dependence in adulthood, regardless of exposure to other forms of domestic violence and related psychosocial stressors.

"The specific impact of exposure to interparental violence on mood disorders has been little studied from early to late adulthood," Dr. Christelle Roustit from INSERM-Universite Pierre et Marie Curie-Paris, France, and colleagues note in a report posted online May 28 in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

To investigate the consequences of a childhood climate of parental violence, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with 3,023 adults representative of the general population in the Paris metropolitan area.

Sixteen percent of those interviewed said they had witnessed their parents fight before the age of 18 and these individuals had a higher risk of psychosocial maladjustment.

After adjusting for family- and social-level stressors, adults who were exposed to interparental violence in childhood had a 1.44-fold higher risk of having depression. They were also 3.17 times more likely to be involved in conjugal violence, 4.75 times more likely to mistreat their own child, and 1.75 times more likely to have alcohol dependence, compared to those who had not been exposed to interparental violence in childhood.

"The odds ratios were strong enough to suggest that even mildly violent acts, such as verbal rather than physical acts, have negative consequences in adulthood," the authors note.

In comments to Reuters Health, Dr. Roustit said: "A safe familial relational atmosphere is needed for a child's development and an adult's psychosocial adjustment. Therefore, intensifying domestic violence -- including interparental violence -- prevention and screening is a public health issue of well-being of future generations."

J Epidemiol Community Health 2009.

EMDR Therapy is an empirically validated treatment of trauma and other adverse life experiences.

[https://www.emdria.org/page/what\\_is\\_emdr\\_therapy](https://www.emdria.org/page/what_is_emdr_therapy)

### \*\*\*Net News\*\*\*

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful.

#### **How to Stop Disrespecting Your Children**

<http://kindredmedia.org/2016/04/how-to-stop-disrespecting-your-children/#comment-287037>

#### **Meditation Plus Running as a Treatment for Depression**

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/meditation-plus-running-as-a-treatment-for-depression/?r=0>

For information or links to health tips, visit:

[www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

Parents, The Anti-Drug Website:

[www.theantidrug.com/advice/](http://www.theantidrug.com/advice/)

### Self- Help Corner:

Alcoholics Anonymous:	780-424-5900
<a href="http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org">www.alcoholics-anonymous.org</a>	
Al-Anon/Alateen:	780-433-1818
Support Network / Referral Line:	211
Distress Line:	780-482-4357
Cocaine Anonymous:	780-425-2715
Access 24/7	780-424-24

### Parenting Corner

Mornings Are Hard. Here's How to Make Them a Little Bit Easier. By Paul L. Underwood

<https://parenting.nytimes.com/work-money/mornings-are-hard-heres-how-to-make-them-a-little-bit-easier?action=click&module=guidance&rank=3&position=0>

Play in Early Childhood the Role of Play in Any Setting  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/play-in-early-childhood-the-role-of-play-in-any-setting/>

From the American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement Media and Young Minds

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162591>