



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

VIRTUAL ACTIVITY, REAL CONSEQUENCES

SOCIAL MEDIA HIJACKS YOUNG MINDS.

Changes in the teen brain make social rewards—getting a compliment, laughing at a joke, etc.—feel a lot more satisfying. Receptors for chemical messengers such as dopamine, the “feel-good” hormone, multiply in a young brain. As a result, young adults are extra sensitive to attention and admiration from others on social media.

## WHAT IS AFFECTED?

**Memory:** Content, recollection, and capacity of memory are influenced.

**Focus:** Heavy users become less able to ignore distractions.

**Rewards processing:** There is increased activity in the part of the brain that responds to risk-taking.

**Social or emotional response:** Interactions online can influence behavior in the real world.

## HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK?

Young people should take some time to think about how they use social media, video games, and other technologies. They can ask themselves questions like: How much time do I spend online? Is it taking away from healthy offline activities, like exercising, seeing friends, and sleeping? What content am I seeing? What feeling does that content create?





**81% OF  
TEENS  
USE  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
DAILY**

## **MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Low-self esteem
- Body image issues
- Suicidal thoughts
- Addiction

## **MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA SAFER**

There are things that everyone can do to protect teens from the dangers of social media. Establish time limits and rules for social media use. Report abuse or inappropriate content to the proper authorities. Talk about how social media is different than real life. When used correctly, social media can be a positive in their life by helping them connect with others.

**THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS  
OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BRAIN  
HEALTH ARE UNKNOWN.**