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Addiction to social media makes internal emptiness a normal feeling

Metro investigates how social networks affect us.



LUZ LANCHEROS
Metro World News



Seeing others who seem happier than me. Worrying over the new profile picture that does not have as many likes as it should (“Am I ugly?”). In a hyper connected world, people who constantly spend time on social networks make these behaviors normal almost 24/7. But what they do not know, is that several recently published studies reveal that virtual world could cause sleep problems, depression, anxiety and other related problems such as loneliness or envy.

There are three billion people – according to the latest Globalwebindex study – who spend two hours of their day sharing and watching posts on any social network. Many of them share parts of their lives, opinions, and thus they see those of others.

“When you’re on Facebook you produce dopamine at a high level, which is a substance that occurs in other similar addictions, such as gambling or drinking.”

Yair Amichai-Hamburger, director of the research at Center for Internet Psychology, Israel.

“Do not confuse the instrument with the use. Social networks can be a fantastic tool to escape from the stress that daily life causes us and a way to fight loneliness, which is one of the contemporary evils,”

Daniel Barredo, senior researcher at the Universidad del Rosario, Colombia

But leaving aside the stress of all situations up to online harassment, people have normalized the fact that hyper connectivity is harmless, when, perhaps, apart from all these conclusions, when it comes to relations, it may very well not be so.

“There are more acquaintances who spend more time on Internet consumption. And phubing (paying more attention to your phone than the person in front of you. – Ed.) is a fact. We are a hyper connected society on different platforms and devices, but this does not necessarily have to be negative,” media expert Víctor Solano, explained to Metro.

Long before the results of these studies, this same argument has been used in the face of new technologies:

what if these behaviors are nothing more than misuse or lack of platform regulation?

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Yair Amichai’s tips on how to return to real life:

- At an early age, we have to work on the development of autonomy. That is true individuality. On the Internet, we have a false individuality, people do not understand what the concept is.
- Develop critical thinking. We have to understand what is behind the message, the one that says that if I do not connect, I will miss out on incredible things.
- Emphasize internal motivation. What is it that I want? You have to teach children to develop their true motives and needs.
- Know what it is that produces your communication on these networks. If I put a provocative photo,

I will receive thousands of likes, but you do not control this image anymore.

- Kids should know that empowerment is carried inside. With our close circle, in turn, we must create islands of love, leave our smartphone’s aside, we show others that this is more important. A relationship deserves investment, quality moments.

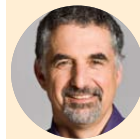
is possible to associate these conditions with their presence on networks, what would be convenient is to try to weigh if this originates with a certain platform and, if so, progressively reduce its consumption or even delete the account on that network; try to activate offline routines, and even deal with a specialist.” Daniel Barredo, senior researcher at the Universidad del Rosario, Colombia, stated.

The expert also emphasizes that people live less connected, since they are less interested in what happens on networks.

“Through greater knowledge – without the novelty effect of the first years – users try to ration consumption, with responsible practices, but the online world should in no case be a substitute for offline reality,” he added.

However, other experts are not so sure of this claim, especially regarding web behaviors and the way of relating to others. Yair Amichai-Hamburger, director of the Research Center for Internet Psychology (IDC) in Israel, who has been studying the subject since 2005 and author of “Internet Psychology Basics”, explains to Metro some of the dangers he sees in the standardization of social network abuse.

P&R



YAIR AMICHAH-HAMBURGER.
director of the research at Center for Internet Psychology, Israel.

What are the negative and positive impacts of social media?

Social networks like Facebook have had a positive impact, such as bringing people together, helping them to express themselves, finding a great support platform for relevant causes. However, it has brought negative things as well: we know from research that when you are on FB you produce dopamine at a high level, which is a substance that is produced in other similar addictions, such as gambling or drinking. There is also a special danger with young people, who have confused the concepts of friendship and intimacy there.

What do you mean?

They have replaced the quality of friendship with the number of friends and likes they have and this has confused them with the idea that they can make friends easily. Now, we have become public relations officers of our own lives. We feel like we have to be promoting happiness, happy moments. This creates false

friendships and does not give you the psychological bases and benefits of a true friendship. So, we have people connected all the time, but they feel alone because they do not express true intimacy or connection. And when you’re busy showing all day long how happy you are, it’s terrible, because you have no tools of true intimacy. And there is a neurosis in promoting yourself and that is addiction, because you must keep people interested with likes and shares and sell your privacy at all times. If you share something happy, and have no likes,

“On social networks, if you do not pay for the product, you are the product. This demands that you sell your privacy and not develop true individuality or relationships.”

Yamir Amichai

what is really a happy moment? We give others the power to determine that. This affects the individuality of those that are young. They need the approval of others. Your privacy and individuality are false. It does not happen with everyone, but I see it more and more.

That describes the life of many...

People think it’s normal, but it’s not normal and it’s not right. Facebook enrolls us for free, but if you do not pay for the product, you are the product. And this is very dangerous, because Facebook, in its own way, has control over our lives. Now George Orwell’s 1984 “Big Brother” comes with a smile. Happiness is for sale and people buy it, because people believe that they live freely, but that’s not freedom. And so, social networks control our lives more and more. And this happens with all social networks. Do you use WhatsApp?

Yes, I do.

Why does the application have to tell us that the person is writing? Why is it important to tell us this? You may not know it. There are many important psychologists behind the mechanics of social networks to make sure that we are there. They try to give a 24/7 experience. And although there are benefits, the trend is rather negative.

