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How Social Media Effects Friendship

 Social media has a negative effect on friendship because it takes away genuine human interaction. Social media has replaced conversation with emojis, symbols, and text messages. We have types of “point systems” today that track our popularity. After sharing our personal information on the internet, there are little topics left to discuss in person. Social media has a huge influence over how we dress, who we interact with, and how we feel about ourselves and others.

The Black Mirror episode “Nosedive” showed how in a near future the negative effects social media has on worthwhile human interaction. It takes it away and replaces it with fake attitudes, and conversations. Everyone just wants to have a good rating and a better number instead of actual friendship. In the episode, the main character Lacey become so obsessed with her number that she is willing to do almost anything to improve it. The number is a rating that determines what kind of places you can get into, the kind of home or apartment you can buy, how nice the things you buy or rent are, and determine your social status. Lacey goes to extreme lengths to try and get a discounted rate and ruins the relationship with her brother and ends up in prison. She doesn’t have any genuine friendships or relationships with anybody because she is so concerned with getting a high rating. Her attitude is fake as are her interactions with other people. She does good things just so she can get good things in return. Social media in this society has ruined friendship and genuine human interaction and our society is not far behind.

 Instead of face to face conversations, social media has replaced them with emojis, symbols, and text messages. We communicate through many different platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Smartphones have a keyboard of just emojis that could represent anything from an emotion to a specific country. It takes away from using words to talk about or describe something. Our brains get so used to using these symbols that we start associating emotions and feelings with these pictures and when the picture isn’t there then we feel like something is not right about the conversation. In my own experience with this, I have been in conversations with people where they talk about if a person doesn’t use emojis, then they are a boring person. It is not fair to judge someone just because they choose not to express themselves with emojis and use words instead.

Social media has created many different kinds of “point systems” where you can see how many “friends” a person has, what their Snapchat score is (the number of times they send or receive pictures,) and how many “followers” they have. Just like in the “Black Mirror” episode, many people become obsessed with these numbers and how high they can get them. While for now, these are only online and are not directly related to what we can buy, own, or where we can travel, it is a very real possibility. Many people see their followers as a rating that directly correlates to their popularity and social status. Kids get made fun of if they don’t have very many followers and it can ruin their self-esteem moving through middle and high school. Children are getting access to social media earlier in life and are growing up highly involved in it. Friendship becomes more about how many followers you can get and less about creating authentic relationships with other people.

 Social media shares our personal information and by the time you actually meet someone in person, there are fewer topics to use in conversation. When making a profile on Facebook you are asked to fill out facts about yourself such as your birthday, your hometown, your likes and dislikes, who your family is, and where you go or went to school. If someone were to meet you online first then when they met you in person, they would already know the answer to any kind of small talk questions and the conversation would have to extend deeper into your life or not advance into anything. This hurts friendship by not allowing these topics to be discussed in a genuine and meaningful way. You could easily decide not to interact with someone based solely off of their information that they decide to share online, and it could result in never experiencing a friendship with that person. For instance, they could be a genuine, kind person, but because you dismissed them based on the fact that they like Fleetwood Mac, you will never get to experience the good that could possibly come from their friendship. The lack of friendship takes away any possibility for meaningful interaction.

There is the argument that social media helps improve friendship by giving us access to people who live long distance, or who you don’t see as much. However, if you genuinely wanted to interact with these people, you could easily pick up a phone and have a conversation with them or make plans to get together in the future. Social media does make it easier to access friends that you already have, however it should not be the only thing keeping the friendship together because then you only see the filtered down versions of each other’s lives and never get to interact with their true selves. It does smore harm than good to use social media as the only way to keep up with friends.

 Friendship is negatively affected by social media and how it replaces friendship with alternative forms of communication and interaction. The “Black Mirror” episode Nosedive seems futuristic, and far from reality. However, we are closer to their society than we realize. We prioritize how we look on social media and how we interact with people on these platforms in order to gain popularity and so people will like us. We don’t even care about having a real friendship anymore. We want our Snapchat score to be high and to have the most followers on Instagram, but we neglect the people who are actually in our lives and who genuinely care about us. Conversations are harder to have when all of the information that would normally be in the conversation is posted on your social media for everyone to see. It becomes harder to make friends, not easier. Social media is damaging to friendship because it takes away the genuine emotion and interactions that are involved in friendship.