

Friendships Through Social Media

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Introduction

How would you feel if your so called “close friend” did not like or comment on a recent picture you posted? Social media is detrimental for the quality of friendships. It provokes negative thoughts and feelings towards yourself as well as those involved in the relationship. I will show how a few of these emotions develop, as well as what can happen as a result. The negative effects that can arise from social media friendships include but jealousy, having no self-esteem, and a decrease in the quality of relationships.

Argument

Self-esteem can be significantly affected by things that occur through social media. How you feel about yourself can be influenced by your popularity on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook. That “good feeling” arises when notifications pop up from your friends such as the number of likes you get and little comments that are only but a few words. If these notifications don’t hit a certain number, it causes people to feel bad about themselves and wonder what was wrong with the picture or post. Negative thoughts such as “Did I look fat in this picture” or even “Was I not pretty enough” come to mind and ones’ self-esteem lowers as a result. These bad feelings can also develop when a friend does not acknowledge your picture. In her lecture, Sarai Blincoe, who specializes in psychology, asked the class “How do you feel when your friend likes or doesn’t like your recent post?” (Sarai Blincoe, Feb. 14, 2020). Later on, she explained how many interpretations just a simple like or dislike can bring about. For example, if your best friend likes your picture, then it could mean she approves of it or is encouraging more posts like it. On the other hand, if the post is ignored then it can be taken as a

personal insult. Even this small dispute can produce problems within a friendship; it is unfortunate that something so insignificant could end up causing altercations.

Senses of jealousy and competition are bound to arise with friends when social media is involved. For example, consider a group of three girls who are all best friends. All three girls decide to take and post the same picture after a long day of shopping together. If one of the friends gets a significantly lower number of likes, then it can generate feelings of jealousy towards the other girls in the group. The same type of negative emotions can arise if one of the girls does not get a comment from each of the other friends. With jealousy, comes competition as well. Friends typically compare others by how many followers they have, and rate people based on those numbers. This is an unhealthy way of judging people, and it makes others feel as though they have to have a large number of followers to fit in and have friends. However, this is not the case; unfortunately, society has created these types of standards for others based on social media.

While smart phones may make access to social media easier, it does not make the quality of the online interactions any better. People are so consumed with what is happening on their phones, that they have lost the preference for a quality interaction. Face to face interactions are not as common anymore because it is much easier to just send a text message. "Friends" keep in touch through phone calls and messages; however, these relationships are not as strong as those that communicate more in person. This is due to the fact that it is hard to judge emotions when you are not physically together. Nonverbal cues don't exist over the phone, so you are unable to identify how your friend is really feeling or what they actually want to say to you. The rare friendships that do revolve around interactions that are mostly physically together, still usually get interrupted by phones. This kind of instance is inappropriate considering the person on their

phone is conversing with someone who is not present at that moment. This is unfair to the other individual there, because their friend is not focused on the person right in front of them. When something such as this example occurs, it can cause you to worry about the quality of your friendship. It prompts the friend that is ignored to wonder what happened, and why their friend decided to turn their attention away. The friend that is distracted on their phone might not even realize that they have caused the other person distress. Thoughts such as “Am I being boring” or “Is the person on their phone more important than me” can cross ones’ mind and lead them to feel as though they do not bring enough value to the friendship.

Objection

Some people argue that friendships through social media can actually promote good feelings and strong connections. However, the potential positives are unable to outweigh the negative effects that social media can produce. For example, people can perceive their popularity and “likeability” on a social media platform as the equivalent to having lots of friends. This idea, however, is actually quite far from reality. Maintaining lots of friends on social media does not prove anything concerning how many people you actually have genuine friendships with. No matter how many friends you share, it is the authentic ones that actually count towards something meaningful. The people you are just friends with on social media are not guaranteed to be there for you when you need it most. Friends who stick around through everything and make countless memories with you are the ones that will keep you going. One day you will look back on your lasting friendship and be grateful; however, you will never experience this valuable relationship if you stick to just being friends on Facebook. One can develop a false sense of likeability after gaining a large number of friends on Facebook for instance. This can be harmful because it causes you to rely on numbers as a way to make you feel like you have a decent

amount of friends. No matter the number of likes or friends online you may have, it is the type of relationship that you hold with those people online that really shows something about not just you as a friend, but also as an overall person. When you see a notification that a friend has liked your post, it creates a short spark of connection to whoever's name shows up. But what does that red heart honestly resemble; what is its significance? Are your friends just liking your post because they feel like it is appropriate to do so since you are friends on that platform, or do they genuinely like the idea behind your post? People have all different types of interpretations for likes, comments, and even for people that decide not to follow them back. All of these notifications that we have become accustomed to, can entail a specific suggestion. As a society we depend so much on what other people think and how we are seen as others. Social media has provided us with yet another way to misinterpret things and shine a not so positive light on the things we see and the people who we are friends with.

Conclusion

I have accurately portrayed how detrimental the effects of social media can be on a person, as well as a friendship they may share with someone else. Whatever social media's true purpose is, it is not currently fulfilling it in a positive way.