



# parent tips



# The PRICE of Social Media

Source: *Generation Z Unfiltered* | Pgs 259-263 | By Tim Elmore & Andrew McPeak

As we know social media has taken over, and especially for Generation Z. It is a way of life for them. And, as parents, it's important to talk with our students before we allow them to have social media or remind them of some truths about the platforms. Social media offers...

**P - Personal Platform** | This has fostered a narcissistic culture of selfies.

**R - Reactionary Opinions** | This induces a preoccupation with others' judgments.

**I - Instant Updates** | This can make us impulsive with short attention spans.

**C - Constant Information** | This has caused angst and depression in users

**E - External Stimuli** | This can lead to addictive lifestyles with our devices.

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Before we go forward I don't want us to only see these as negative impacts of social media, but to find ways to counter the negative realities that coincide with the emergence of social media.

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## 1. Personal Platform - Avoid a Narcissistic Culture of Selfies

Our phones enable us to both take a selfie and post it in a matter of minutes. According to a survey from Luster Premium White, the average Millennial will take over 25,000 selfies in this lifetime. Ninety-five percent of young adults have taken one. Today, a million selfies are taken every day. Why am I telling you this? Because these habits can lead to us only thinking...well...about us. It is good to know why we are posting and then to observe what we are posting about.

## 2. Reactionary Opinions - Preoccupation with Others' Judgements

Our world is constantly critiquing every word and thought they have. Why? Because social media enables it. Students are constantly checking comments, likes, dislikes, views, and shares. Sadly, it's like an evaluation of their identity. They become consumed by focusing on others' opinions of themselves, and on the opposite end unconsciously judge others because of the culture they're consumed by.

## 3. Instant Updates - Impulsivity with Short Attention Spans

When something is easy to access, the activity can easily be impulsive. Social media fits that criteria. An example of this is the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment (which we may all be familiar with) where the kids were told that they could enjoy a marshmallow immediately or if they waited they could get more than one. As you can assume some waited, and some did not. Researchers followed up with the children as they became adolescents. They found that the kids who could delay gratification were psychologically better-adjusted, more dependable, and even as high school students, scored higher GPAs. The characteristics remained with them good or bad. It's far too easy to be impulsive when we can react hiding behind a screen.

#### **4. Constant Information - Angst and Depression in Users**

There is constant information 24/7 that our brains are trying to consume. Neuroscientists now report that when we have no margins in our calendar we have less capacity for empathy or creativity. The irony of social media is profound. While many of the messages come from friends we know, the onslaught of information can lead to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and other such negative emotions. Yes, it's crazy to say that's a real thing, but the happy messages ironically can make us feel sad and anxious.

#### **5. Addictive Lifestyles with Their Devices**

Let's bring some science into this. Because millions of students have social media posts delivered to them with a notification, their psyche becomes conditioned to react to the ping of their phone. Psychologists remind us that dopamine is released as students become expectant of this ping. It can actually become addictive. Students have said that their phones are as essential as water and air. Further, the data shows that social media addictions can actually pave the way for other addictive behaviors. This was according to research in the 2013 Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation, who also says cell phone addiction can negatively impact brain development.

As stated above this information is not to push them away from social media. We as a staff do not recommend or push our Middle Schoolers to social media at all, however as they get older we understand we can use it more as a tool when used responsibly. So how can you help your teen use social media responsibly?

##### **1. Awareness**

You can walk them through the **PRICE** of social media before you allow them to have it. Or you can go through these with them to help remind them of the tensions that they do face if they already have an online account.

##### **2. Information requires application.**

Any time I receive information, I should seek the best way to apply it. Most inventions occurred when people became open to reason instead of mere tradition. Give them freedom in searching for answers before you step in and offer a solution.

##### **3. Consumption requires reflection.**

Any time I consume information, I must find time to process what it means.

#### **How can you practically apply the challenge of 2 and 3 above?**

In order to encourage our children to think before reacting, we must teach them the principles of critical thinking. Instead of looking to a teacher for answers, what if we turn kids loose to search and find ideas, and then bounce those ideas off a trusted adult, who can provide wisdom and counsel. Whether that be you, their small group leader, or a staff member. It is important to let them drive the exploration, instead of imposing on the curriculum. We're not saying they don't need adults around; however our role must change if they're to think on their own.