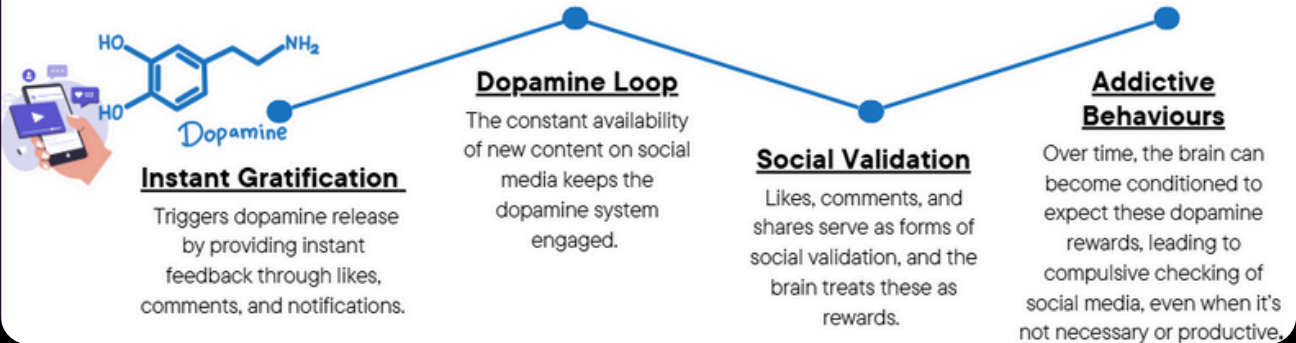


SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR DIGITAL HABITS

The Dopamine - Social Media Connection



Doom Scrolling

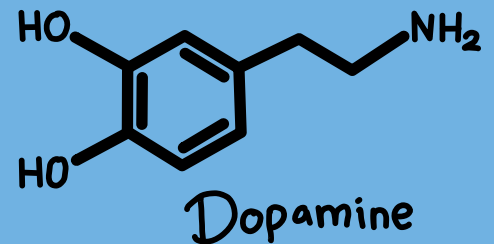
The act of continuously scrolling through negative or distressing news, updates, or posts on social media, even when it causes anxiety, fear, or sadness.

The Highlight Reel Effect

The tendency of people on social media to only share the most polished, idealized, and positive aspects of their lives, creating a curated, often unrealistic representation of reality.

Constant exposure to social media, particularly negative or alarming news, can raise cortisol levels, the hormone responsible for stress.

Social media platforms are designed to keep you in the loop. They feed you constant rewards — new content, likes, and comments — but in unpredictable intervals.



A neurotransmitter, which is a chemical messenger in the brain that plays a key role in reward, motivation, pleasure, and learning.

It is often referred to as the "feel-good" chemical because it is released when we experience something pleasurable or rewarding.

Digital Life Stressors

Constant exposure to social media can introduce stressors like:

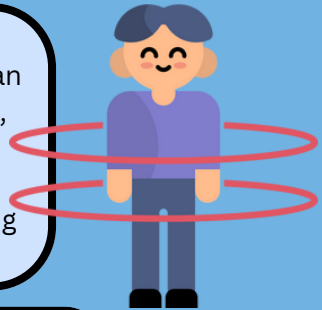
- Information Overload
- Increased Social Comparison
- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)
- Constant Connectivity
- Perfectionism and Pressure to Curate

REGAINING CONTROL OF DIGITAL HABITS

1

Setting Healthy Boundaries around Social Media Use

- Boundaries help you manage your digital lives in a healthy way.
- Social media is designed to be engaging, and without boundaries, it can easily take up excessive amounts of time and energy, leading to stress, anxiety, and unhealthy comparisons.
- By setting clear boundaries around your social media usage, you can maintain control over how you engage with these platforms, protecting your mental and emotional health.



Type of Social Media Boundary	Description	How to Implement
Time Limits	Prevents excessive screen time, protecting focus and mental health.	Set daily or weekly time limits using apps or phone features to track and limit usage.
Content Control	Protects from negative or harmful content that may cause stress or anxiety.	Curate your feed by unfollowing negative accounts and following positive, inspiring ones.
Phone-Free Zones	Encourages a balance between digital and real-life interactions.	Establish areas where phones and social media are off-limits (e.g., bedroom, dinner table, family time).
Response Expectations	Reduces pressure to constantly check and respond to notifications.	Set clear expectations about response time with friends, family, and colleagues.



2

Managing the Emotional Impact of Short-Form Content

Identify Triggers: Notice patterns in the content or situations that trigger emotional shifts. Awareness of triggers can help you better manage future emotional reactions.

Practice Emotional Grounding: Use grounding techniques like deep breathing, focusing on your five senses, or touching a textured object to help stabilize your emotions in the moment.

Slow Down: Avoid fast-paced content that constantly shifts your focus. Engage with longer-form media like books, documentaries, or podcasts that allow for deeper emotional reflection.



3

Dopamine Reset using the Dopamine Menu

Reducing or temporarily eliminating activities that cause constant, quick dopamine hits—like social media—in order to reset your brain's reward system. It helps you regain control over your impulses and focus on more meaningful, long-term rewards.



Cheap Dopamine

Quick, shallow sources of pleasure with little lasting value

Real Dopamine

Fulfilling, rewarding experiences that contribute to long-term well-being and satisfaction.

Identify Triggers: (e.g. scrolling social media, binge-watching tv). Write a list of things to avoid or limit.

Set a Time Frame: Start small (e.g. 24 hrs or 3 days). Decide on boundaries for what you'll avoid (social media, checking notifications, etc)

Engage in low dopamine- rewarding activities using your dopamine menu: Focus on healthy habits (exercise, reading, journaling, mindfulness, cooking). Work on long-term goals (studying, learning new skills)

Gradually re-introduce social media slowly in moderation (e.g. 15-30 mins of social media per day). Practice balance. Reward yourself for meaningful tasks.

