

Social Media



The digital landscape has put increased pressure on teenagers today, and we feel it. There are so many social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, you name it. I made a conscious decision to avoid Snapchat and Instagram because of the social pressure I saw them putting on my 14 year old little sister. If my mom turned off the WiFi at 11pm, my sister would beg me to turn my phone into a hotspot. She always needed to load her Snapchat stories one more time, or to reply to a message that had come in two minutes ago because she didn't want her friend to feel ignored. If I refused, saying she could respond in the morning, I'd get the "You're ruining my social life." speech. Even as a teenager as well, I sometimes find this craze a little baffling.

A new study has found that teenagers who engage with social media during the night could be damaging their sleep and increasing their risk of anxiety and depression. Teenagers spoke about the pressure they felt to make themselves available 24/7 and the resulting anxiety if they did not respond immediately to texts and posts. Teens are so emotionally invested in social media that a fifth of secondary school pupils will wake up at night and log on just to make sure they don't miss out. Perhaps the worst thing about this is that teenagers need more sleep than adults do, so night-time social media use could be detrimental to their health. A lack of sleep can make teenagers tired, irritable and depressed.

During the summer holidays, I lost my phone. For the week that I was phoneless, it felt like a disaster. I love my cell phone. It gives me quick access to information and allows me to be constantly looped in with my friends, to know exactly what is going on their lives. When I didn't have my cell phone for a week, I felt a slight sense of FOMO, or if you're not up to speed with the lingo, fear of missing out. By the end of the week, I'd got used to not having a cell phone and I'd quite enjoyed the break from social media. There was still a lingering sense of sadness at the back of my mind that there would be conversations I had missed, messages that had been sent, funny videos shared and night-time chats that I would probably never get to see.

1. Do you use social media? Why? friends? practice English?
2. Do you believe everything on social media?