

HELPING OUR CHILDREN REGULATE SOCIAL MEDIA

A CARING GUIDANCE FOR MOTHERS

A Summary of a Podcast



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What is Social Media and Why it Matters

Social media includes platforms that allow people to create and share content and connect with others.

- Highly accessible at any time and place
- Free and personalized for each user
- Designed to keep users engaged

Research shows concerning trends among teenagers and young adults users:

- Decline in attention, literacy, and higher-level thinking
- Increased emotional and behavioral challenges
- Heavy daily use across all age groups

Usage patterns:

- Adults: Average U.S. adults: **~2 hours 9 minutes/day**

Teenagers: Average U.S. teenagers: **~5 hours/day**

Why is Social Media Addictive?

Social media is not neutral. It is designed to keep attention.

Key drivers:

- Emotional triggers (stress, boredom, loneliness)
- Habit patterns (checking, fear of missing out)
- Environment (notifications, phone always nearby)
- Platform design (algorithms that learn your preferences)

This creates a cycle: Trigger → scrolling → reward → stronger habit

On a biological level:

- Social media increases dopamine levels higher than normal daily activities.
- Makes real-life activities feel less rewarding

Impact on Children and Teenagers

Teenagers are more vulnerable because:

- Brain is still developing
- Strong need for validation and belonging
- Less impulse control

Risks include:

- Depression and anxiety
- Reduced academic performance
- Loss of interest in real-life activities
- Increased exposure to harmful content

Heavy use is linked to higher mental health problems.

Core Principles for Parents

1. Start with Yourself

- Be aware of your own use.
- Explain to your children what you are doing on your phone.
- Model the behavior you expect.

2. Focus on Relationship First

- Do not damage trust while trying to control behavior.
- Build open and respectful communication.

3. Avoid All-or-Nothing Thinking

- Sudden, strict bans often fail.
- Change should be gradual.

4. Reduce Use Step by Step

- Move from hours → to controlled short periods
- Example: scheduled limited usage instead of free access

5. Delay Exposure

- Experts and medical guidelines suggest delaying social media exposure as long as possible, ideally until age 16.

Practical Approach

1. Set Clear Structure

- Define screen time limits.
- Keep devices in shared spaces.
- No phones during meals or family time.
- Keep phones out of bedrooms at night.

2. Reduce Triggers

- Turn off notifications.
- Be aware of habits and emotional triggers.

3. Build Awareness in Teens

4. Replace, Don't Just Remove

Fill time with:

- Sports and physical activity
- Reading
- Social and family activities
- Community involvement

5. Strengthen Values

- Do not follow “everyone is doing it.”
- Keep consistency between parents and children.
- Use social media with a clear purpose, not out of habit.

6. Trust and Boundaries

- Boundaries create safety
- Trust grows with clear structure
- Clear expectations help children feel secure and guided.

Final Takeaway

The Prophet ﷺ said: The feet of the son of Adam will not move on the Day of Judgment until he is asked about five things: his life and how he spent it, his youth and how he used it, his wealth and how he earned it and how he spent it, and his knowledge and what he did with it.”

Do not lose hope. Change is possible, and addiction can be treated.

Progress starts when you seek guidance and support and take small, consistent steps.

Focus on long-term results rather than quick fixes, and understand that lasting change comes from patience, effort, and steady commitment over time.

Useful Resources

- Useful books compiled by a mom <https://islamicschoollibrarian.com/>
- For tips on how to educate your children on regulating social media use, check out the following resource center developed by the American Academy Of Pediatrics:
<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/5cs-of-media-use/?srsId=AfmBOoqbTiCPqIpGpr1U4Rr1f2XlnCulopCQIrRvK9R58w-BtoPFZa->

For more information and practical tips with Islamic framework check out Digital parenting Toolkit developed by Family and Youth Institute: <https://thefyi.org/digital-parenting-toolkit/>

If you need to seek professional mental health help for more guidance or have concerns about social media addiction, you can check out the following resources:

- **Start with your primary care provider**

They can provide initial guidance and referrals.

- **Contact your insurance**

Ask for a list of in-network mental health providers.

- Muslim or Arabic speaking therapists can be found by searching and applying filters on websites like:

- **Psychology Today** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/>
- **Rula.** Online therapy platform with insurance options. www.rula.com

For those residing in California:

- **Bay Area Muslim Therapists**

Directory of Muslim therapists in the Bay Area

www.bayareamuslimtherapists.org

- **Khalil Center – Santa Clara**

Counseling services from an Islamic perspective

www.khalilcenter.com

- **Trust Mental Health**

Therapy services with a culturally responsive approach

- **Maristan**

Muslim mental health resources and support

www.maristan.org

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Suicide prevention: available 24/7 in the US call or text 988 to reach the

<https://988lifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

or call 911 Or go to the nearest emergency department.