



# *THE DILEMMA OF SOCIAL MEDIA*

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*The Social Dilemma*

# *PART I*

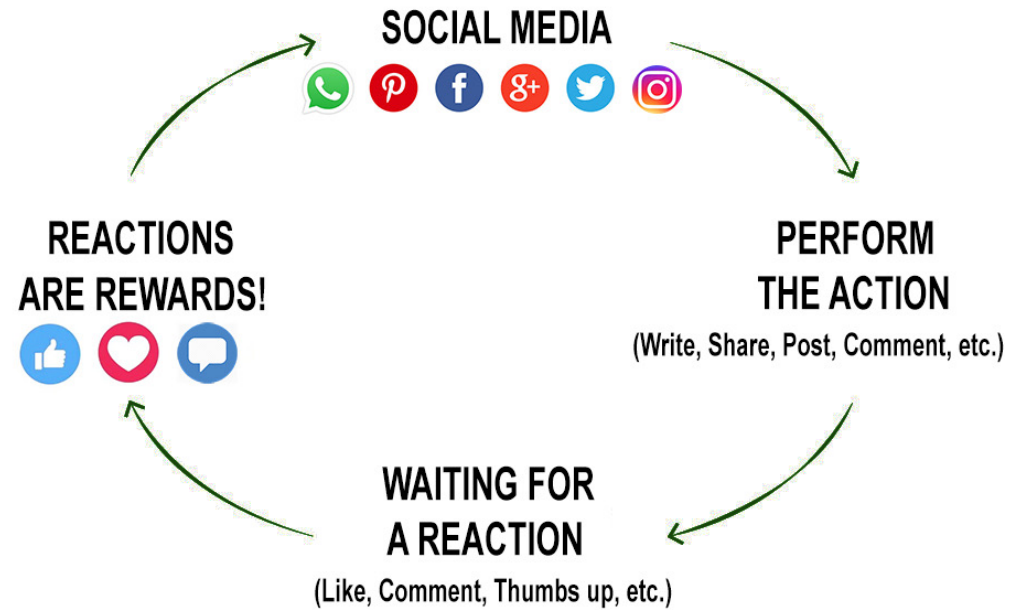
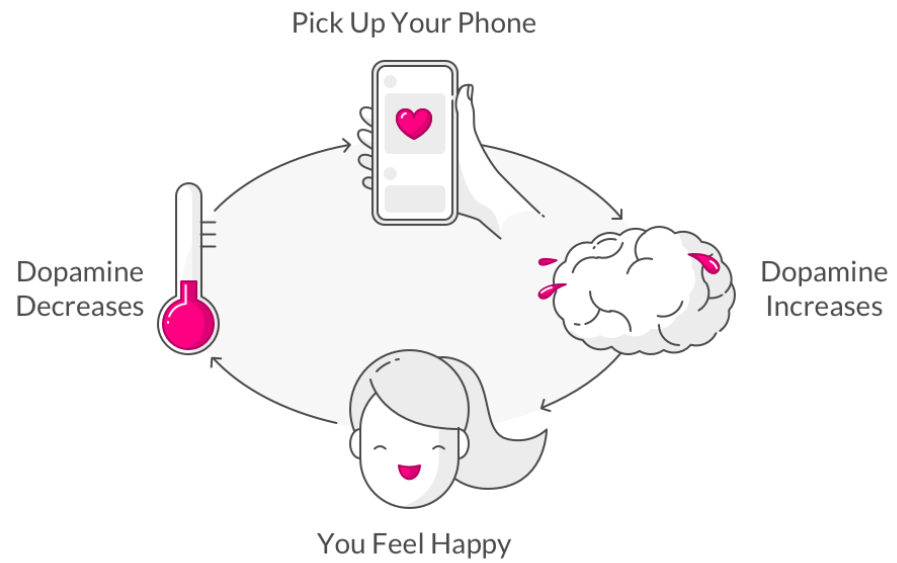
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# *Addiction*

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- Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas.

## The Dopamine Reward Loop



# *Presentation of Addiction*

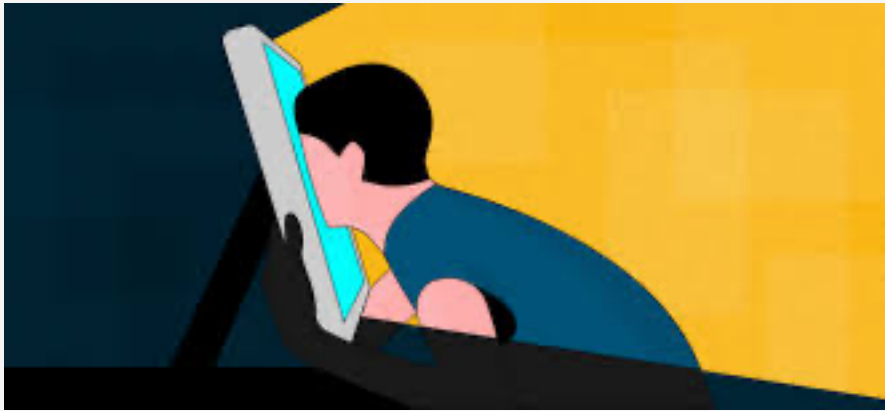
- Addictive social media use will look much like that of any other substance use disorder, including:
- **Mood modification** (i.e., engagement in social media leads to a favorable change in emotional states)
- **Salience** (i.e., behavioral, cognitive, and emotional preoccupation with social media)
- **Tolerance** (i.e., ever increasing use of social media over time)
- **Withdrawal symptoms** (i.e., experiencing unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms when social media use is restricted or stopped)
- **Conflict** (i.e., interpersonal problems ensue because of social media usage)
- **Relapse** (i.e., addicted individuals quickly revert back to their excessive social media usage after an abstinence period)



# *The Impact*

- Global impact – the world is going “crazy”
  - We are being brainwashed to have thoughts we did not intend to have.
  - Who has the moral responsibility?
    - Self-censorship (the company)
    - Government censorship
    - User censorship
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# *What's for sale?*



- Old model: product/software is for sale
- New model: the users themselves are for sale
  - Obtain as much personal data as possible (profiling)
  - Advertisers are the customer
  - Rule of Thumb: "If you are not paying for a product you are the product."
- Target: Increase engagement time
- Why is engagement so important?
  - Goal: produce a slight change in your perception (change how you think)

# *Primary Objectives*

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- MAKE MONEY
  1. Increase Engagement
  2. Increase growth
  3. Increase Ad revenue (money maker)



# *Successful Ads*

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- Surveillance – everything is recorded and monitored
    - Personal profiles are made (personal tendencies)
  - The more they know = the more accurate their ad predictions for you
  - The most accurate predictions win!
  - How do companies compete in the market for accurate predictions?
    - Create Apps and platforms that collect as much data from you as possible
    - Demographics, location, spending tendencies, health info, etc.
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# *Part I*

## *Final Thoughts*

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- “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” (1 Cor. 6:12)
- Who is responsible?
  - Can we control the development of social media platforms?
  - We can control our usage
  - We are responsible for ourselves and family
  - Also for the Church and the world

*The Social Dilemma*

# *PART II*

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# *Recap*

- Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction associated with dopamine spikes similar to drug and alcohol addiction.
    - May impair other important life tasks and responsibilities
  - Symptoms of social media addiction are similar to other forms of addiction
    - Mood modifications, emotional preoccupation, increasing tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, etc.
  - Impact – global
  - What is for sale?
  - What is the primary objective?
    - Money! Achieved by increasing engagement, growth, and ad revenue.
  - Ad success = accurate predictions
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# *Social Media is a Drug*

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- Drugs can be used in positive ways when managed correctly.
  - Physicians and medical personnel train for years to be properly equipped to manage their use to achieve positive outcomes.
- Tools are created to be use for tasks when called upon, not to demand to be used.
- Origins of the “demands”
  - Physical level: Dopamine reward pathway
  - Social level: peers
  - Emotional level: takes advantage of the basic human need for connection and companionship.
- “There are only two industries that call their customers “users”: illicit drugs and software.” – Edward Tufte

# *Drug-Seeking Behaviors*

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- “Breaking the cookie jar”
- Hiding apps
- Manipulating restrictions
- Children: purchasing or obtaining a device without parental approval



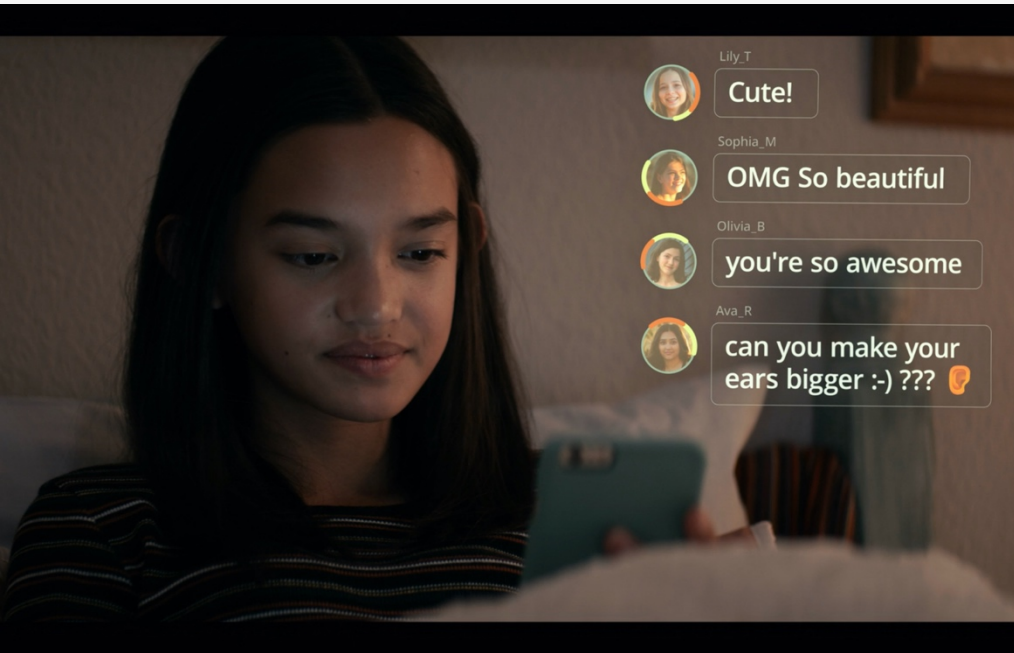
# *The Awkward Dinner Silence*

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- What do you attribute this to?
- With time, social media abuse can impair our ability to value real human connection – erodes social fabric
- EX: Saying “hello” or “good morning”



# *Is it a “big deal?”*



- Addicts often downplay the impact of the substance or behavior - “It’s not a big deal.”
- EX: The girl who does not get “likes” without digitally modifying her photo.
  - The problem is deep: can take over a person’s self-worth and identity.
  - How do we react to negative comments? What people say or think of us?
- We are not created to experience social approval from thousands of people every few minutes.
- Problem: we confuse social approval with truth
- Fake brittle popularity – leaves you empty and lonely

# *Detrimental Effects*

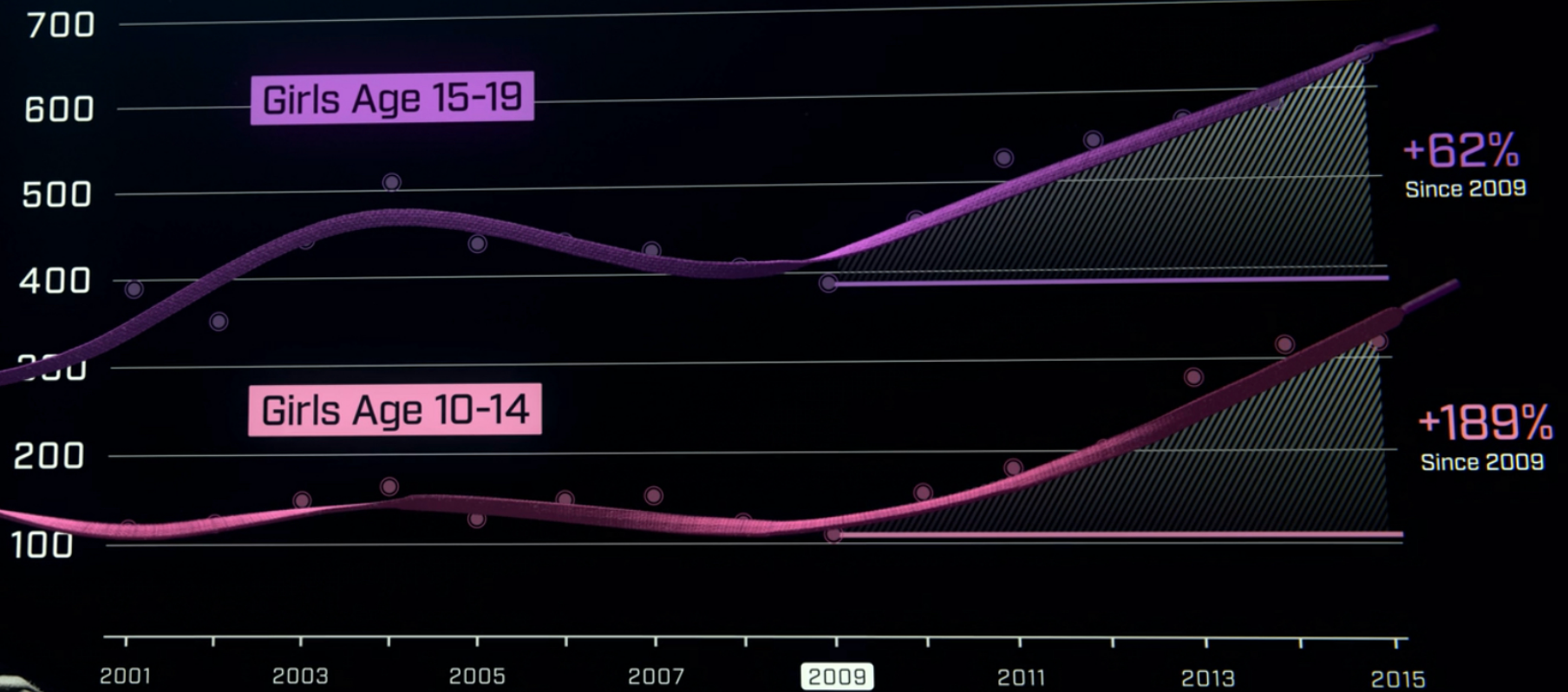
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- Increases depression and anxiety
- Exponential increase in the prevalence of non-fatal self-harm



# U.S. Hospital Admissions for Non-Fatal Self Harm

Per 100,000 Girls



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

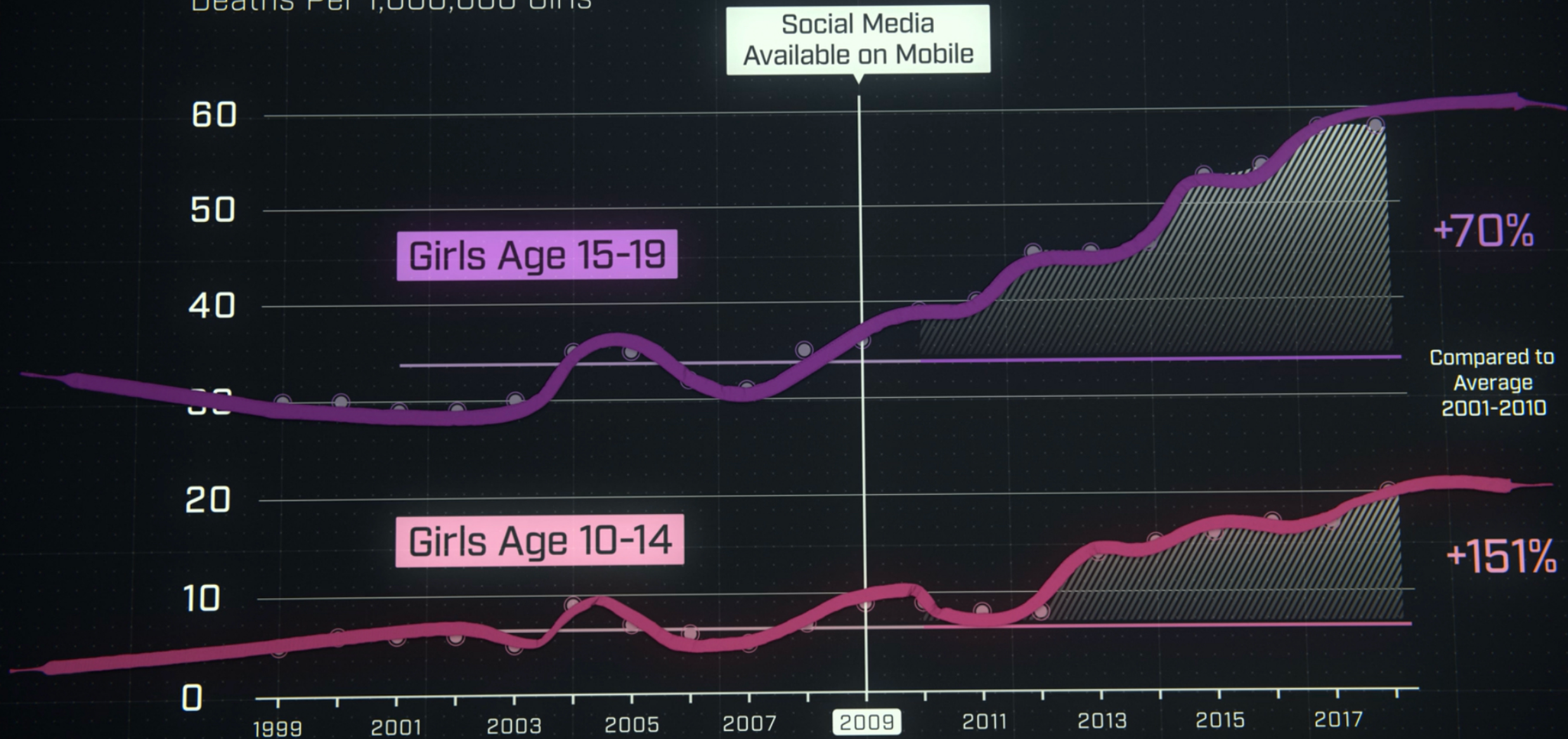
# *Detrimental Effects*

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- Increases depression and anxiety
  - Exponential increase in the prevalence of non-fatal self-harm
  - The same is observed in suicide rates
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# U.S. Suicide Rates

Deaths Per 1,000,000 Girls



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# *Detrimental Effects*

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- Increases depression and anxiety
- Exponential increase in the prevalence of non-fatal self-harm
- The same is observed in suicide rates
- With each case, a family and community is effected and potentially traumatized.
- A whole generation (Gen Z) is generally more anxious, depressed, and more fragile.
- These services are killing people and causing people to kill themselves.
- False narrative: "We will learn how to live with them."



# *Artificial Intelligence*

- Already runs tech today
- Are not objective
- Are optimize to some definition of success
- Data is collected and algorithms analyze and use the data in hopes to achieve a set goal.
  - With every success and failure it becomes "smarter"
- Humans set the goal limits and the AI will determine how to get there.
- Human, in a sense, have lost control of these system.
  - They determine what we consume
  - They are controlling us and we them



# *Cause for Concern*

- FB knows everything about you, and you know nothing about it.
- The fearful thing is not when tech surpasses human strength, but when it overwhelms human weakness.
- Google search results change based on what they know of you and where you live.
  - Generally, not everyone who search a similar topic will see the same results.
- Each person will then develop their own truth
- This will create a false sense that everyone agrees with you.

# *Part II*

## *Final Thoughts*

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- If you are unsure or feel controlled by social media, game, and the like seek help! Do not delay.
  - Willfully humble yourself to the guidelines set by those responsible for you (parents, confession father, teachers, etc.).
  - Prefer and value in-person human connection
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# *Part II*

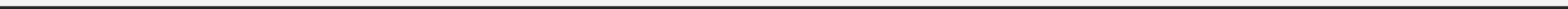
## *Final Thoughts*

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- Where do we get our self-worth and identity?
- “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”  
(1 Cor. 6:20)
- Beware of harmful false narratives
  - “We will learn how to live with them:”
- Do not believe everything you see or hear on online.

*The Social Dilemma*

# *PART III*

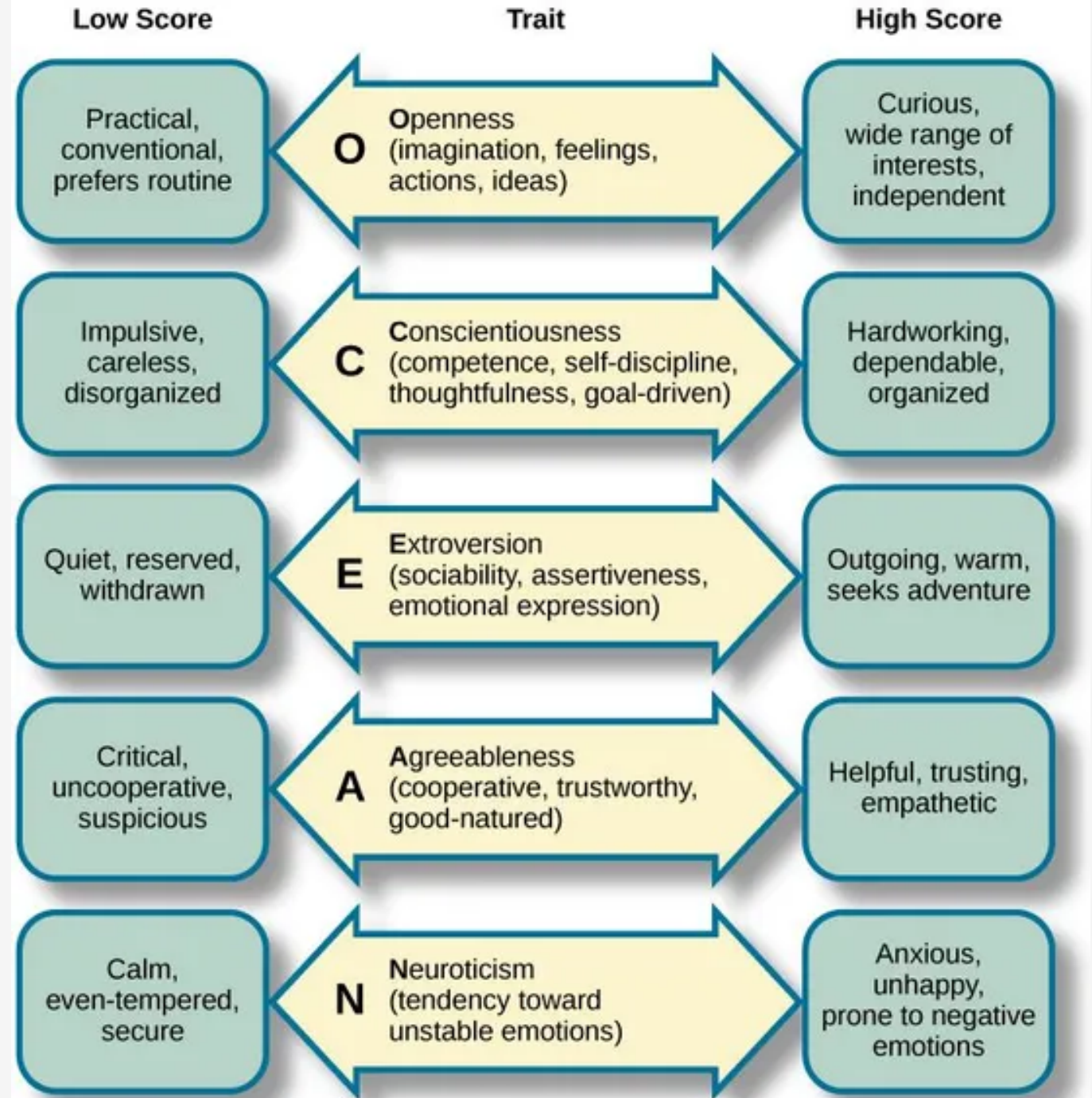


# *The Rabbit Hole*



- They find an entry way to push their agenda
- How do social media companies determine what may attract you into a rabbit hole?
  - The use of algorithms to evaluate your personality traits

# *Big Five Dimension of Personality*



# *Algorithm Accuracy*

- In 2015 the University of Cambridge in collaboration with Stanford University proved how accurately algorithms can identify what psychologists call the 'Big Five' dimensions of personality just by looking at Facebook likes.
  - With 10 "likes" it knew a person's preferences as well as a co-worker.
  - With 70 "likes" – a friend
  - With 150 "likes" – parent or sibling
  - With 300 "likes" - it was more successful than a spouse
- This solely used the "like" button. Factor in all the other data we provide (for free) like comments, shares, searches, videos watched, etc.
- Advertisers can reach their target audience with pinpoint accuracy.

# *False News and Propaganda*



- Fake news on Twitter spreads 6x faster and the truth
  - “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom. 1:24-25)
  - How would the world look?
- The system is bias towards false information
  - Why?
  - Because it sells
- Should it be permitted that a company profits on disinformation?

# *False News and Propaganda*

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- Social media platforms can be used as tools of persuasion.
- Easily disseminated manipulative narratives
  - Trial and error data is almost immediate
- Very cheap
- These algorithms can and are employed by various groups interested in manipulating a large population.
  - Politicians
- False news is presented in a manner that seems reasonable to the viewer.
- News is absorbed passively – we do not choose the content presented.

# *False News and Propaganda*

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- Propaganda
  - information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.
- If several people can be convinced of an idea via propaganda, then they can effectively prey on others using peer pressure.
- This has been used as a type of cyber warfare to destabilize institutions and countries.
  - With the growing popularity and use of social platforms their effectiveness is lethal.

# *Identifying Propaganda*

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- NAME CALLING or STEREOTYPING
  - This is used to make us reject and condemn a person or idea without examining what the label really means.
  - Examples: "Intolerant", "Bigot", "Nazi", "Environmentalism", "Special-Interest Group"
- VIRTUE WORDS or GLITTERING GENERALITY
  - These words are used to dupe us into accepting and approving of things without examining the evidence carefully.
  - Examples: "Natural", "Democratic", "Organic", "Scientific", "Ecological", "Sustainable".
- TESTIMONIAL
  - When some respected celebrity (or alternatively someone generally hated) claims that an idea or product is good (or bad).
  - This technique is used to convince us without examining the facts more carefully.

# *Identifying Propaganda*

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- PLAIN FOLKS
    - This is a way that a speaker convinces an audience that an idea is good because they are the same ideas of vast majority of people like yourself.
    - Examples: "This is the will of the People", "Most Americans...".
    - When the speaker tells a story about a family or people that are "just like you" to reinforce the speaker's point of view.
  - CAUSE AND EFFECT MISMATCH
    - This technique confuses the audience about what is really cause and effect.
    - In fact the causes of most phenomena are complex, and it is misleading to say just one.
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# *Identifying Propaganda*

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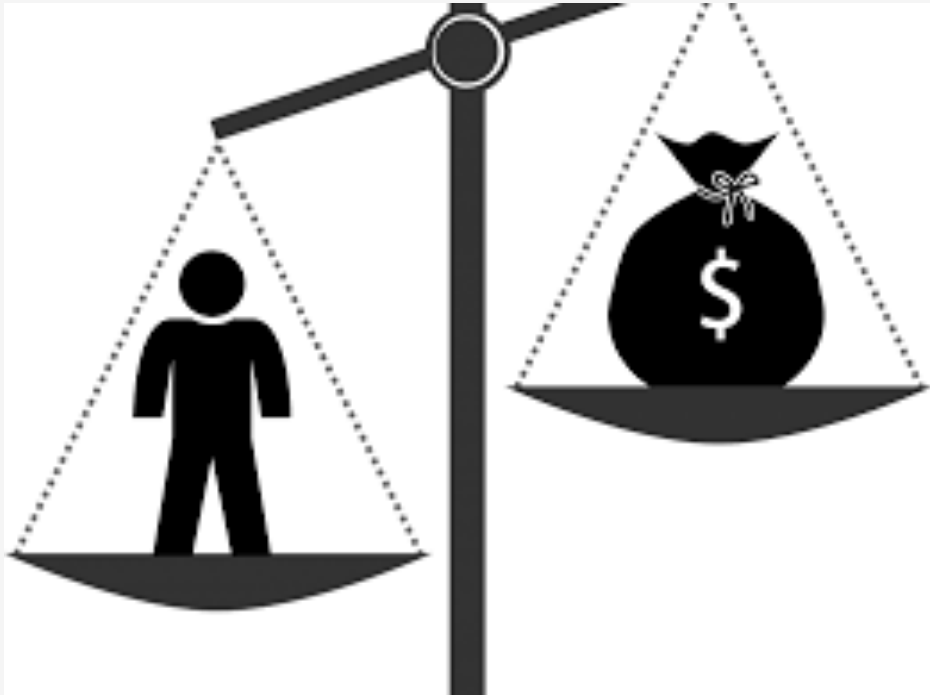
- DISTORTION OF DATA or OUT OF CONTEXT
    - This technique is used to convince the audience by using selected information and not presenting the complete story.
  - WEAK INFERENCE (or False Cause):
    - Weak inference is when a judgment is made with insufficient evidence, or that the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the evidence given.
  - FEAR
  - ad hominem ATTACK (also called Deflection):
    - You attack the messenger, instead of the argument or evidence that is presented.
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# *Truth*

- If everyone is entitled to their own facts, then this would leave no room for compromise.
    - We need to have some shared understanding of reality (truth)
  - Who should be responsible solve the problem of evaluating truth?
    - Tech companied? They are driven by money
    - AI – does not know truth
  - Can technology be an existential threat?
  - Technology has the ability to bring out the worst in people and society.
    - “civil war”
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# *Value*

- People or Profit
- Is money more valuable than community, morality, nature, or human life?
- If we value the truth and humanity more, what can we do?



# *What can we do?*

- Recognize that it's a problem
  - Uninstall apps that waste your time (including games)
  - Turn off notifications
  - Never accept a video or as suggested to you
  - Use extensions that block ads or suggestions
  - Help make the "system" better by what you click and view
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# *What can we do?*

- Regarding views:
    - Primary source of truth is scripture and the church
      - What does the Spirit of the Bible and Church say? (e.g. Abortion)
    - Consider all views not just the newsfeeds or people you follow.
      - Do your own research and come to your own conclusion.
  - Consider how those who created social media limit their use of it.
    - Do not give devices to their children
    - No social media (games need to be limited)
    - “virtually no screen time”
      - This ought to be considered when permitting children to go to a neighbor or friend’s house.
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# *What can we do?*

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- Rules:
    - All devices out of rooms at a fixed time
    - No social media until HS
    - Work out a time budget
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*QUESTIONS?*