

[IMAGE]

Depressed by Social Media

By Editorial Staff

Based on the amount of time the average teen spends engaged in social media, it would be easy to assume it's always an incredibly enjoyable experience. Not so fast. In a perfect social media world filled with only "Likes," thumbs ups and positive comments, that might be the case, but as we all know, the social media world isn't nearly that affirming. In fact, research suggests social media use is associated with symptoms of depression, and teen girls are more likely to be affected than teen boys.

Published in *EClinicalMedicine*, the new study analyzed social media use in nearly 11,000 teenage boys and girls (all age 14) and symptoms of depression. More than one in five teens who used social media for 3-5 hours a day had depressive symptom scores that exceeded teens who utilized social media for 1-3 hours a day. However, the association proved stronger in girls: 26 percent compared to 21 percent of boys.

Girls in general had higher depressive symptom scores than boys, independent of social media use, and reported higher engagement with social media compared to their male counterparts. With that said, two conclusions can be reasonably inferred from the study findings: 1) Teens (boys *and* girls) who spend excessive daily time on social media are more likely to be depressed; and 2) Teenage girls may be at higher risk because they tend to use social media and experience depression symptoms (in general) more frequently than teenage boys.

depressed woman - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark In addition to monitoring the sheer amount of time your teen spends engaged with social media, what are some other potential factors that could factor into the equation and also deserve your attention? According to the researchers, sleep habits (too little sleep can mean too much time using social media) and negative social media experiences (cyber-harrassment) can also relate to depressive symptoms. So can poor body image and overall poor self-esteem, both of which can be influenced by social media – especially image- / photo-based platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. The bottom line: If you care about your teen (which we know you do), teach them that social media has important benefits and equally important drawbacks – and how to tell the difference.

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