

## Social Media by Basmala

Social Media. *Social-Media. So-cial-Me-di-a.*

According to Google, Social Media is defined as “**Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking**”. To break this down further, Social Media is a modern and advanced method, which intelligently allows people from across the globe to communicate and connect with one another. But does Social Media *really* connect us together, it does it tear us a part? Do we truly use it to “*create and share content*” or to destroy ourselves? Today we are going to explore how Social Media has negatively influenced our lives, as we mindlessly allow this murderous manic overshadow our world.

The term ‘*Cyber-bulling*’ has only been around for about a decade, yet it has had such an irreversible impact on thousands of people’s lives, mainly including 14-19 year olds. Is it not traumatic enough to be constantly tormented, agonised and uncomfortable in real life, but to be in your virtual life as well? To have this never ending cycle of anxiety and apprehension rotate your judgement and manipulate you? No wonder the rates of depression have increased by 18.4% in the past 7 years! Unfortunately, with cyber-bullying, suicides aren’t far after. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently updated that every 40 seconds, one person commits suicide due to being harassed online. It has become the second leading cause of death in young people, aged between 15 and 29. All it takes is one action, one comment, one word to completely turn over someone’s world and make them want to disappear, but at what extra cost?

With Social Media, comes a whole new meaning of interaction.

“Oh look, there she goes, off to the Bahamas, AGAIN! I could never have that much money. Wow, she’s really pretty. Are my thighs too big? I need to fix my teeth. Oh, my nose is too flat, why can’t it look like Kylie Jenner’s. She’s absolutely stunning. Epitome of perfection. Ugh, why do I have to look like the way I am!”

As you can see, you are automatically handed over this condemned mentality the immediate second you begin to scroll on your feed and there’s no way that you wouldn’t feel a burden of pressure weight over your conscious. The media has established what society prefers to classify as ‘beauty standards’ that you can’t help but compare yourself to other people. Your self-worth and self-respect begin to decline, and your detrimental drive for comparison and to ‘fit in’ gradually increases. What we never tend to realise is that Social Media is only a filter. It only displays the positive and entertaining parts of the individual’s life. However, behind the screen, there is a human being- who makes mistakes, has their own issues, insecurities etc. The sooner we begin to acquire this state of mind, the healthier, satisfied and content we’d become as we realise that it is all an illusion, that no one is perfect, so we feel at ease with our imperfections.

My cousin, who is only about one year younger than me, received her first phone at the age of 9. After that, she was never the same again. She became the definition of an addict. Before school, on her phone. After school, on her phone. At meal-times, on her phone. Any free time, on her phone, at family gatherings, you guessed it, on her phone. A long time ago, people used to use social media as a form of escapism, to break away from the daily grind of the gruelling work-ethic of the world, but now, we use regular, technology-free activities to

escape from our phones. This is gravely damaging to our mental, physical and psychological health which causes many health issues such as depression, addictive behaviour, sight problems, nerve damage, brain cancer and so forth.

It is estimated by experts that the average person spends about 4 and a half hours on their devices. Four and a half hours per day may not seem like a lot. Well, what if it was four and a half hours per day, everyday for a hundred years, for arguments sake? Well, that's about 164250 hours, which is equivalent to 18.75 YEARS! Are you seriously prepared to watch 18.75 years of life go to waste?

You may think by now that the point I am trying to make is that "Oh no, Social Media may be the biggest killer of mankind!" but it doesn't have to be. If we just use it for its primary purpose, "*to create and share content or to participate in social networking*", whilst being wholly aware and understanding of all the dangers that we have discussed about, it can profoundly be such a remarkable advantage in life. For example, this past year and a half when the world was uncertain and hectic, social media was our only form of contact to those who we truly love. Without it, we would have been completely lost as it helped the world stay united and together whilst we were physically apart.

We must begin creating a safe and welcoming environment online by putting the supportive, sincere 'Social', in Social Media.

Thank you for listening,