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ENGL 117

Audio Essay Script: Social Media and Relationships

\*sounds of tweets, Instagram posts, Snapchat camera clicks, and iMessage notifications\*

\*background music fades in\*

Ekta: Maintaining a compelling social media presence is so important in our daily lives. It consumes us as we check how many likes we get on Instagram, how many friends we have on Facebook, and how many retweets we get on Twitter. We wake up in the morning excited to check our phones for the latest scoop on celebrity gossip, to read new comments on our posts, and to send our Snapchat streaks.

It feels like there is pressure to perfect our online selves. Life seems perfect when you boil it down to a few million pixels. We agonize over who has the cutest posts, how we can get the perfect angles on our profile pictures, and how others edit and filter their posts. Everything revolves around our social media presence, and we want validation from others about our own lives. Our relationships have been altered by social media. Now, it’s as if a relationship is no longer between two people. It’s about what the rest of the world thinks about the relationship. How cute it is, how much fun they have, and how “Instagram-worthy” their hangouts or dates are. Mayurakshi Ghosal gave the perfect example of a typical teenage friendship at a TED talk:

Clip 1: “Our past hangouts were only of us taking tons of pictures to post on Instagram and texting our other friends about just how much fun we were having… even though we were together all this time, we really didn’t know each other very well.”

Ekta: Social media furthers friendships and relationships, that’s for sure. However, social media may undermine the depth and character of our connections. Without face-to-face interactions, our relationships rely on these shallow connections. The pressure to seem popular amongst our friends overwhelms us, and we forget the actual friendship itself. Why does this happen? One reason is that social media has become so readily available. Texting a friend or loved one is a lot easier than arranging a two-hour hangout or date. Interacting with our friends and loved ones also releases dopamine, a chemical in our bodies that makes us happy. Interactions on social media are not only easier to carry out, but they release the same amounts of dopamine. Essentially, it is the same amount of happiness for less effort.

 While social media provides us with validation, self-confidence, and feel-good vibes, it also is a source of insecurity for many. We become obsessed with learning more about our crush’s most recent tweet and checking up on our significant others’ followers. Trust in romantic relationships is often jeopardized as people start comparing themselves to what they see on their partner’s feed and making assumptions about the other relationships their partner has. Psychiatrist and relationship expert Dr. Major advises against invading a partner’s privacy on social media.

Clip 2: “What you don’t want to do is start scrolling and trolling each other’s feeds looking for evidence that supports your own insecurities. Just don’t do it. It’s a bad idea. What’s the biggest problem in relationships? Communication! And so following each other’s feeds on social media increases the likelihood of miscommunication or misinformation.”

Ekta: At the end of the day, face-to-face communication is always the best way to further a connection—whether it is a platonic friendship or romantic relationship. Social media often allows people to forgo more deep and personal interactions, and this provides a crutch for many. As the relationship goes on, the two parties become dependent on social media to maintain the connection and to show the public they are thriving, and this isn’t a solid way to communicate and form strong bonds. Open, honest talks are much healthier for relationships.

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