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The Costs of Social Media

It seems that social media is making Americans actually less social. Whereas people used to be entertained by the stories of family members, now they read their phones , scanning for the latest gossip. Is having instant access to everyone’s thoughts and ideas on our devices possibly doing more harm than good? Social media has had a negative impact on society because it leads to a bad self-image and enables criminals to hurt innocent people.

The first negative impact of social networking is it leads to a bad self-image. First of all, as it says in the video “Think Time: Teens and Social Networks,” as many as “39% of teens have been cyberbullied” (first half). This quote shows that more than just a small population is being affected by this. Secondly, because of cyberbullying, “27% of teens who experienced bullying online thought about skipping school or skipped it” (“When Bullying Goes High Tech,” paragraph 6). Clearly, it is because of bad experiences with social media that students are willing to give up getting a good education because they are afraid to confront their bullies at school. For these reasons, the bad self-image that teens have about themselves from social media sites makes social media have a negative impact on society.

The next negative impact of social media is that it enables criminals to hurt innocent people. First of all, “Cybercriminals use social networks to steal personal information” (“Think Time,” second half). This is very scary because lots of teens post personal information about their address or phone number, which become known to the wrong people. Also, about “25% of social networking accounts are fake” (“Think Time,” second half). People might create an account to steal information or identity - or even cause harm to another physically. Social media makes it much too easy for criminals to learn about the personal information of their targets. There are bad people out there, and privacy is becoming less and less with each new account that volunteers personal information. For these reasons, the terrible ways that criminals use social media is yet another reason why social networking had had a negative impact on society.

Some people would claim that social media has had a positive impact on society. For example, they might say that “technology creates ways for extending one’s circle of friends” (“Social Networking Benefits Validated,” paragraph 5). They might also add that “technology is going to encourage skills for jobs we didn’t know existed” (“Social Networking, paragraph 13). It is true that there are positive aspects to social media. But the possible benefits just are not worth the risk. And what if someone tried “extending their circle of friends” online but was not successful doing so? They would feel even lonelier. For these reasons, while it is true that social media is not all bad, its impact is still more negative than it is positive.

Many people have learned the hard way that social media has had a negative impact on society. Considering that there are over 950 million users of Facebook, most people probably know somebody who has been a victim of identity theft or cyberbullying (“Think Time,” second half). Mow many more people will be hurt by the over-sharing on social media sites before they learn too late about its dangers?