

Is Social Media Impacting The Way We View Ourselves?

Ebony

In 2018, 4 in 5 Australian's were using social media, which is 79% of the total Australian population (*Sensis, 2018*). This is becoming a concern, as social media is becoming a growing issue in many aspects of people's day to day lives. I am sure we have all heard this before, but have you thought about the impact social media is having on our body image and the way we view ourselves? If not, maybe you should.

Body image is how a person views their physical health and the thoughts and feelings they have as a result from the way they view themselves (*Butterfly Foundation for Eating Disorders, 2019*). Amongst the concerns for young people, body dissatisfaction is one of the top 3 ranked issues (*Butterfly Foundation for Eating Disorders, 2015; Mission Australia, 2011*). In a study completed last year, when young people were asked about their self-esteem and experiences with social media, most female participants said they felt insecure and obsess over the amount of likes they get and fear they don't look good enough in their photos (*The Inquisitive Mind, 2018*).

Body dissatisfaction is not only an issue because it means a person is not satisfied with them self and feels as though they are not good enough, but it can also lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety and can also cause people to have an eating disorder (*Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2018; Office of Women's Health, 2018*).

Because this is such a big issue, with such negative implications, it is important to know how to decrease the risk of these issues. These could include limiting the amount of time spent on social media to decrease the risk of it becoming a denominator in one's life. You could also make sure to connect with your friends and family in person, rather than just on a screen and make sure that the people or pages you



are following on social media are spreading a positive message, rather than following pages which make you look down on yourself (*Achauer, 2018; Lee, 2014*).

The social media giant, Instagram became aware of the harmful impacts social media sites can have on people, therefor implemented the strategy of taking away the visual of how many likes a post has received. This decreases the pressure people feel to post something which will gain more likes, instead people can be themselves and not feel as though it is a competition to have more likes than others (*Mix, 2019; McCormack, 2019*). Although this has been implemented, which is a big step in the right direction, there are other strategies that can be put in place. These could include; social media apps having pop-ups, highlighting when the app has been used excessively, to prevent people from overusing the app. Pop-ups can also be added for when a photo has been digitally changed so people are less likely to compare themselves to the manipulated image (*Macmillan, 2017; Behind the News, 2017*). Another major possible strategy to decrease the risk of people being negatively affected by social media, is teaching the topic of safe use of social media in schools, as well as teaching students of the impact social media may have (*Behind the News, 2017; Ed Technology, 2017*).

If you are being affected by the negative impacts of social media and have a poor perception of yourself or body image and need support with your mental health, Beyond Blue and Reach Out.com are support services which can help.

