
GIRLS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Most basic drive in the life of a girl is the need to be social and have friends and avoid being rejected by others in public and especially online where hundreds of unknown people can witness your humiliation
- Social media companies use persuasive design to exploit your desire to be socially successful and accepted
- Conditioned and rewarded to get as many “likes”, followers, retweets, reposts, great selfies and long threads on Snapchat
- All about the dopamine hit you get every time you click on something



Only time in your life that you will be rewarded for being someone other than who you really are.

Creates 2 significant problems for girls when you try to have your basic human needs fulfilled in cyberspace:

Problem #1 - Posting a “curated” version of your life online adversely affects you because you are painfully aware of the gap between the pictures you post and reality.

- social life revolves around inclusion and exclusion
- cyberspace bombards you with pictures of girls whose beauty is artificially enhanced making them feel even more insecure about their own appearance
- expected to brand “me” but their fluid identities do not stand the test of time and they struggle with a real identity and confidence in who they are which leads to issues like anxiety and depression

Problems #2 - The way girls aggression plays out online

- Not normally physical but are more “relationally” aggressive
- Try to hurt their rivals’ relationships, reputations, and social status (ie. using social media to make sure other girls know who is intentionally being left out)
- Aggression takes the form of calling each other out, posting about one another, trying to get a reaction out of the person to just plain cruelty and bullying

- Such behaviour is made possible by the “online disinhibition effect” – feel more uninhibited and express themselves more openly online
- Think of others online as less than human and therefore we can be harsher in what we write and say and fuel our aggressive drives
- Easy to spout rude language, harsh criticisms, anger, hatred, and even threats (online bullying and stalking) – **thanks to cyberspace, we regress to our basic instincts for survival as it were**
- When people think their identity remains hidden, they feel less vulnerable about letting out what would otherwise remain repressed in the real world – say and do stupid things when you are not looking the person in the eye
- whatever they say will not be connected to the real self because it happened “out there” online
- Cyberself is responsible for it almost as if morality and ethics have been temporarily suspended from the online being in an “**isn’t me at all**” attitude

Problem #3 - Girls not prepared for the demands of sudden attention.

BOYS AND ONLINE GAMING

- **Brockville father, tear in eye, 15-year-old son**
- drive to accomplish things/sense of skills, be in charge of their environment and have power over things
- tech companies along with a very smart group who study our brains created video games that have convinced boys, better than anything else in our culture, that gaming is where to develop competency and be in control of an environment



The Truth About Boys and Dopamine

- Technology discovered that online gaming was the way to keep boys on their screens – all about the dopamine kick or called the “feel good” drug in your brain
- The more dopamine a drug releases in the brain’s reward system while playing games, and the faster it gets released, the more addictive online gaming will become
- Feedback from social media posts and the rewards provided with online gaming do both
- Eventually need more gaming time just to get the same effect
- Dopamine is released in your brain even before you play as in when you see a screen and a gaming icon that can be clicked on – you are getting doped up even before you engage in the game (simple way to keep you addicted without you knowing it)
- This “pre-reward” dopamine spike in response to see the screen explains the anticipatory pleasure we experience when we know good things are coming
- When you get the expected reward, you get an even bigger spike
- When you don’t get the expected reward, the lack of dopamine results in a craving which results in your seeking out another reward
- Why it’s hard to stop playing games or stop checking your social media or stop clicking on search buttons because we are led to believe, with dopamine’s help, the next reward is just a click away
- It all becomes a vicious, endless circle without any end in sight – games like Minecraft, Fortnite, and Call of Duty have no end; can be played forever
- Imaging studies show that video gaming triggers the release of dopamine at levels comparable to an intravenous injection of amphetamine

So, what makes our screens so manipulative and why can't we pull ourselves away from them? Here are 6 areas where we need to be careful.

1. Online games provide fun failure

- I've fallen prey to fun failure on more than one occasion.
- I'm convinced that even though I didn't find what I was looking for on this page of Google search results, it must be on the next page of suggestions
- Every time you hit the search button or click on a button to go to a new page, a little drama is unfolding in your brain that creates expectancy which in fact has been found to deliver a little dopamine to the brain
- Even if we don't find what we are looking for, whether its new information or a new experience, just the process makes us feel good just trying – even failures are fun
- It's not a huge blast of pleasure but just enough to keep you online – this is what conditioning is all about
- When any behaviour is rewarded with pleasure, you are more likely to repeat it
- Even though you are failing miserably, you still feel good, because the dopamine tickle makes all the difference
- The mere act of thinking you will win fuels your brain with enough energy to keep playing
- Each type of online activity has its own built-in rewards that keep you wanting to return

2. Online searching is hypnotic

- I was recently spoke to a group of JH kids at Jordan Christian school about how many buttons you could open on any page which then leads to more clicks and so on and so forth for a lifetime if you wanted to.
- One of the girls in the class named Skye referred to it as "the trail of curiosity". I thought that was a brilliant way to think of it knowing that our curiosity is rarely satisfied.
- God created us to be curious people to help us grow and mature but the Internet takes advantage of that God-given part of who we are
- Why is the mere act of searching online so hypnotically compelling? Because you get a hit of dopamine every time you hit the search button thinking you will find what you are looking for – the longer the search, the more dopamine and the more dopamine the more you search
- Every button you hit is yet another pull of the figurative slot machine as you never know where the trail of curiosity is leading but it is always laced with dopamine rewards

- Our screens provide us with instant results which feeds our curiosity - Facebook 4,280,000,000 results (0.69 seconds) which would take you 14 years to read at 1 minute per page, we are surprised with unexpected information and opportunities to explore endlessly, and all the while with alerts, notifications, lights and colours that mesmerize us; why would you ever want to leave?

3. Social networking is a feel-good experience

- How many of you have ever watched TikTok?
- Every experience is unique to only you in that moment of time and can't be duplicated by buying a product that anyone else could get
- TikTok is all about experiences where people do things they hope no one can repeat
- TikTok isn't addictive because you think the creator is funny; it is addictive because it uses one of the most sophisticated persuasive algorithms on the planet to choose the videos that will keep you watching
- Tracks the websites you browse, how you type, your keystroke rhythms and patterns, how long you linger over a piece of content, how long you hover over a button and don't click on it, if you pause on a video, rewatch content, your shares, likes and follows, tracks your emotions based on the words you use, learns your vulnerabilities and then looks for vulnerable content to keep you watching
- In 3 minutes it has figured out how to send you risky videos based on your words
- "I usually don't plan on watching TikTok for long but I tend to just keep scrolling and it feels like time doesn't exist."
- Exactly what TikTok wants you to feel; time distortion at its best

4. Comparing yourself to others

- We like to compare ourselves to others and its something we all do God created us to live in community; it's part of who we are
- Problem is we think everyone online is happier, has more friends, and is better looking than we are
- Therefore, we need to try harder to measure up for the sake of LIKES and THUMBS UP

5. Creates flow experiences for online gamers

- Psychological state of being in the zone – you can't believe how well you are playing
- You lose track of time and ignore other obligations in your life

- You enter higher and higher states of excitement (dopamine) as you play
- It's not you at all – its how the games manipulate the flow of dopamine in your mind – you are literally out of control

6. Social reciprocity or the need to say nice things

- It's the obligation you feel to return the favour of positive feedback you get online
- You get a dopamine hit every time your check your posts and you get another dopamine hit every time you return the favour
- This is why you keep checking your phone
- Michael Morrison story of girl who could play basketball till she got at least one like on a picture she posted seconds ago