



CONCERN:EAP

# Healthy & Resilient You



**Social media has transformed the way we interact with each other and the world around us.** Online networks connect us with friends and loved ones—both old and new—helping us to keep in touch across the years and miles in ways we couldn't have imagined. What's truly amazing is that social media users report greater awareness and confidence in their *real-world social support* systems thanks to the connections they build online.

An ironic thing about living in a hyper-connected world is that the technology that connects us can also isolate us if we spend too much time in the cyber world. Social media can help us combat that isolation and build stronger bonds, and that's good. But, what if it's possible to get too much of a good thing?



## Immersion and Awareness Overload

Deep immersion in social media can lead to unintended consequences, like awareness overload, which can be broken down into two types.

**Type 1:** Log on to your social media of choice, and you're likely to see friends, coworkers, and celebrities sharing details of their "perfect" lives. These idealized versions of reality can sometimes lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, stress and even depression as we worry that our lives aren't as exciting or eventful as those of our online peers.

**Type 2:** Conversely, social media can create a barrage of stressful news too. Upsetting headlines of current events, or a friend's posting about a job loss, accident or other misfortune have a cumulative effect, further increasing feelings of stress and anxiety.

Recent studies also show that emotions – including stress – may be contagious through social networks. One Pew Internet study found that our stress levels ratchet up every time we see a close social media acquaintance experiencing tough times.

Some stress *can help motivate us and fuel resilience;* but too much can overwhelm us, taking a toll on our moods and productivity, adversely affecting our health and happiness.

## 🔌 Turning Off the Tap

So how can we reap all the positive benefits from social media usage without collecting the stress?

First, take an (honest) audit of your social media use by asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I frequently compare my life to what I see online?
- Do I spend a lot of time trying to come up with something to post, either about myself or in response to another post?
- Do I spend a lot of time idly scrolling through feeds, or feel anxious that I might miss something if I'm not online?

Now, think about how you feel during and after your interactions with social media. Do you feel uplifted? Deflated? If you're more often upset or deflated from social media, think about the cause. Is it a general feeling, or are specific people or topics bumming you out more than others?

After you've completed this check-in, you might see some patterns you'd like to change. Try a mix of these ideas to build your own strategy for healthier—and happier—social media immersion.

1. **Hide it.** If specific people or sources are causing you stress, try hiding posts from them, or in extreme cases blocking or un-friending them.
2. **Limit usage.** Set a timer for social media use, and stick to it. Start with a 15-minute limit, and when the timer goes off, completely log out and shift your attention to something else. (If you find it hard to disengage, try a quick **body scan meditation** to refocus your thoughts.)
3. **Be positive.** This has less to do with inflating your online life or persona and more to do with treating others with the same respect you'd use in real life (IRL). Don't write posts or responses in anger, and always think before posting. Remember, if you wouldn't say something to a person's face, you shouldn't post it either.
4. **Limit your list.** Some studies relate larger online networks with more stress and social media anxiety. Don't worry about getting every person you've ever met to follow or friend you. Instead, stick with people you would want to have coffee or an actual conversation with.
5. **Take a break.** Sometimes the best way to reset your spirits and your social media habits is to unplug for a while. Try a social media fast over a weekend or during a vacation, and consider using the time you gain to connect with others IRL, exercise, or pursue a **rewarding hobby**.



For even more ways to help cultivate mindfulness and resilience in 2018, visit the Resilience Hub™ at [www.ConcernResilienceHub.com](http://www.ConcernResilienceHub.com) regularly. First time users may be asked to enter their company ID.

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice.

If you find your level of stress is impacting your well-being, you can contact us for additional help and support.

**Call: 800.344.4222**  
[employees.concern-eap.com](http://employees.concern-eap.com)