

## Facebook, Teens, and Depression

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I heard on the *Today Show* this morning that teens become depressed when they look at Facebook and find that their friends have more friends than they do, more exchanges than they do, and more pictures than they do, etc. These comparisons may very well be discouraging to social minded teens. Viewing Facebook hour after hour, day after day, might be to them an indicator of how to judge themselves. At the same time, feeling unloved and unworthy of love in teens is not limited to comparing Facebook entries.

There is no doubt Facebook depression can be a genuine concern; especially for those more or less “obsessed” with social media. Facebook lends itself to comparison and comparison has a huge impact on young people. There is no doubt that teens already leaning toward depression might interpret themselves and their worth according to social media standards. However, parents, important adults, good friends, and quality led youth groups have even more impact on a teen’s inner health.

Though this is not a full answer to the comparison problems, how might someone show value to a discouraged young person? Find something that the young man or woman is interested in. Ask them about it. Do you know what movies your young person likes? Do you know the favorite food of the young person? Have you an idea of how the young person likes to make him or herself feel good in healthy ways? What are the young man or woman’s friends like? Do they have friends? Whose life inspires them?

Showing interest is not going to solve depression because depression is a complex physical condition as well as a social one. This writing is simply to raise awareness in those who care about teens who may be suffering from a malnourished sense of worth.

There is a saying about self-worth that may come from Chinese culture. No matter where this comes from, consider this concept. Pretend there are two opinions or choices fighting for attention in a teen’s mind; one good and one bad for the person. Picture these two opposing thoughts as dogs fighting. The saying is; feed the dog you want to win. Feed the idea you want to win. Feed the part of the young person that you want to be significant. Talk to them about competing thoughts and how they might invite Jesus to help them pay attention to the truth about how they are loved by Him.

Facebook for SOME, is definitely NOT feeding positives to the young person if they believe themselves to be inadequate. As you know it is not Facebook itself that is the problem.

Even if your attempts at feeding the positive in your young person seem, or *are* poorly done, your efforts are impacting them more than you know. It is effort that people remember, not the quality of the effort. It is the truth of Jesus’ love for them that will stick even if it seems not to impact the hearer. For those who may only be using social media for their idea of their worth, your connection may give a young person far more courage than you know.

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