March 2023 School Newsletter

## Youth Self-Esteem & Peer Pressure on Social Media

Smartphones and social media have transformed childhood. 92% of adolescents are active on the internet daily and are active on at least four social media platforms. It can be hard to help your child navigate this unfamiliar world with your different childhood experiences.

There is a [youth mental health crisis](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/01/trends-improving-youth-mental-health). More than 40% of teens struggle with persistent sadness or hopelessness. Many factors have played into this mental health crisis. Rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts were on the rise before the pandemic. These issues were intensified by COVID-19. Some factors are mental health stigma, discrimination, and online bullying. Online bullying and social comparison thrive on social media.

**PEER PRESSURE**

Peer pressure has always been a stress point for teens, but social media has increased its effect and reach. Youth are exposed to risky behaviors like drug and alcohol usage and violence on a more regular basis. Teens are trying to mimic their peers. When they do, they receive positive reinforcement of this behavior through likes and comments. This pressures teens to conform to their peers. Social media also creates anxiety about FOMO or “fear of missing out.”

**SELF-ESTEEM**

According to a study, social media causes a decrease in self-esteem (how you think about yourself), most affecting girls ages 9-14. Adolescents are just learning who they are and are sensitive to comparisons. Social media leads youth to make irrational opinions of their peers’ lives based on brief videos and photos, which creates insecurities and mental health issues.

Additionally, any hate or rejection is permanent. Teens cannot escape bullying when school ends because it now follows them everywhere online. Signs of low self-esteem include self-deprecation, discounting achievements, inability to accept compliments, fear of failure, placing blame on themselves, and feelings of anxiety or shame.

**NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA**

Smartphones and social media are a key part of children’s lives today. Not all social media use is bad. Some youth find healthy connections and validation from peers on social media.

Help your child have a positive experience on social media. Have open and honest conversations with them about their self-esteem and the dangers of social media. Encourage them to protect their privacy, never to share information they wouldn’t feel comfortable with the whole world knowing, to remember that tone is hard to convey over text, to remember anything online is permanent even if deleted later on, and to speak to others how they want to be spoken to.

Talk to your kids about substances, suicide, and their strengths to prevent risky and harmful behaviors. **Learn how to have these conversations at** [letstalk.care](https://www.wecarepeople.org/letstalk)**.**