Did You Know?

ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL
education
prevention
intervention
FOR THE PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL
AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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Media and Mental Health: Thanksgiving is a time to reflect and share gratitude. A common comedic response one can expect to hear during this year's festivities is, "I am grateful for my phone, tablet, laptop, etc." But for all the good that comes with having the world at our fingertips, are there any drawbacks? In recent years we have experienced a push to "unplug" ourselves from the internet and social media periodically, as a form of self-care. Studies have found a link between mental health disorders and heavy internet use. This notion can be cumbersome for the many who view the internet as a place for individuals who otherwise struggle finding connections elsewhere to form relationships that aid in the battle towards positive mental health.

What You Should Know:

- A study conducted by the Child Mind Institute found that in 2012, 49% of teens preferred in-person communication, whereas in 2018 the number dropped to 32%. The study also found that 72% of surveyed teens felt that social media constantly needed attention. 81% of surveyed teens felt that social media helped them feel more connected to their friends.

- The National Center for Biotechnology Information identifies a clear inverse relationship between healthy habits and phone addiction. A study that surveyed 425 undergraduate students found that when viewing a friend's Facebook page, many participants had the impression that other users were happier. These perceptions don't automatically correlate to depression, however such activities can heighten depressive predispositions and negatively impact a user's mental health. Comorbidities linked to the study resulted in "sleep affectations, anxiety, stress, and consumption of substances, such as alcohol or tobacco, particularly in adolescents."

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) classifies internet addiction disorder as: a preoccupation with the Internet that can lead to a tolerance. Oftentimes those suffering have made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop their Internet use. Those suffering may also experience difficulties in relationships, jobs, education, and maintaining their mental health.

What You Can Do:

- **Talk It Out:** Social media may be a great way to stay connected, but don't let it be the only way. Be sure to foster relationships in-person as well. When viewing others' online profiles, try to celebrate their successes and not compare them to your own. Remember, every journey is unique. Lastly, if you or someone you know is posting negative thoughts or asking for help on social media, find support. Connect with linkages such as **Crisis Services** and **ECCPASA**, or find a local mental health counselor/provider.

- **Take a Break:** Today there are many apps that can monitor and help regulate "screen time" and social media usage. These apps can be a wonderful tool to help restore the internet balance in a person's life. Besides using this as a tool to track your own personal usage patterns, parents can also use such apps as a way to monitor and restrict the amount of time adolescents spend connected to their phones/tablets.

- **Sleep On It:** Studies have also shown limiting screen time an hour prior to sleep can have positive effects on mental health. Try removing phones and tablets from your evening routine.

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The Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Inc., publishes Did You Know, a regular update about alcohol & other drugs - - America's #1 public health problem. ECCPASA • 1625 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, NY 14216 • 716-831-2298 • www.eccpasa.org