



On The Road Again

By Wayne and Tamara

I have been married almost two years to my second husband, and we were together almost five years before we got married. We are truck drivers and work together so there is never alone time. My husband is mentally abusive and has been for a long time. He puts his ex-wife before me. Our income used to be half and half, and now it seems like it is all his. I don't get a say in how or when it is spent. His bills come first. I am constantly told I'm stupid, worthless, and can't do anything on my own. The list goes on and on.

I look at my husband now, and I don't like what I see. He looks at pornography on the internet daily, and I have caught him writing to other women. He says I am making it all up. He is also a lazy person who won't even get up to get his own drink. Deep down all I want to do is leave.

Gina

Gina, this is the picture we get from your letter. You and your husband are long-haul truck drivers, living in the sleeper of your truck, driving day and night as you crisscross the United States. It's a hard life and a hard job, and when you add emotional abuse to it, it becomes impossible.

Most people believe that those who are rude or abusive or cruel need to change. Tamara doesn't take that view at all. She believes jerks have the right to be jerks. Why? Because if you had the right to change your husband, he would have the right to change you. And a man like that would have already written us asking how to transform you into what he wants.

You are holding your hand in a fire. Until you accept that you are the one who needs fixing, you won't pull your hand out. But you are fortunate because you have a driving skill which is always in demand. You could go anywhere.

Establish a home base, even if it is only a furnished room, and explore with an individual counselor why you are willing to accept abuse in your life. Jerks get to be jerks, and that is perfectly all right. What they don't get to do is ruin our lives. Pull your hand out of the fire.

Wayne

Pants On Fire

My boyfriend told me he broke up with his ex-girlfriend six months ago when he moved her back to her house. He has been working and living with me in another city since. He seems to have an answer for every question, and the only thing I really know about him is what he tells me. I admit I did jump into this relationship quickly.

I recently found out he calls her every day. He is supporting her 100 percent. I also saw part of an email where he said he loved her and can't wait to come home with her. He claims he did not know why he sent the email, and he denies everything else. He tells me he loves me and wants a life with me. Do you see any hope for our relationship?

Stephie

Stephie, should we repeat your words back to you? You got into this too quickly. One of the worst things you can say about someone is they have an answer for everything which satisfies nothing. That's a character flaw and a marker for a person who is self-centered and untrustworthy.

Some of us don't have the temperament to fire another, no matter how much they need to be fired. If you can't argue with his silver tongue, after you tell him he is moving out, block out his words by singing a song to yourself. The one we suggest begins, "Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more no more no more."

Tamara



Bans Versus Boundaries Finding a Solution to Teenage Social Media Usage

By Camryn Bland
Youth Columnist

Social media is something engraved into the lives of billions of people around the globe, practically unavoidable in daily life. These platforms have many benefits, as they are an accessible tool for connection, communication, entertainment, and self-expression. Despite these benefits, it also presents many challenges and consequences, especially for young users.

Adolescents continue to engage with social media, despite the obvious consequences, and they will continue using it unless meaningful and strong actions are done to prevent it.

For teens, social media is more than just an app, it's part of a shared routine. It offers instant connection with friends and a sense of belonging; when an individual cuts off social media, it can feel isolating, as they are also cutting off the connection. At an age where these simple relationships feel critical, easy connection seems almost essential, and social media provides that. Additionally, it acts as an easy booster for self-esteem, as likes, comments, and shares can feel incredibly rewarding. Social media also provides easy, endless entertainment through short-form content, which can feel difficult to step away from. It is a quick source of dopamine, influencing individuals to rely on it as an instant mood-booster.

These benefits often blind teens from the consequences of social media, which are otherwise hard to ignore. Heavy social media use is often connected to increased anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and an overall increase in stress among teens. The online world is one of highlights and perfection, which creates an unrealistic standard which teens struggle to meet. They doubt their appearance, experiences, or talents simply because they don't mirror the content behind the screen. This pressure and comparison negatively affects mental health for individuals of all ages. Additionally, the algorithms which control these platforms are designed not just for entertainment, but entrapment, as they hope to keep users scrolling for as long as possible. Without noticing, teens easily lose hours of their days online, ruining their mood, mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.

These consequences are not new, and not unknown. For years, psychologists have been worried about the impact of social media, especially on adolescents. The new research isn't about the issue, it's about the solution. Recently, governments around the world have begun to respond, each with different ideas of how to save teens from the addictive media. Countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom are introducing social media bans for youth, only allowing individuals above a certain age to create accounts. While this is a step forward, it does not seem to be a total solution. Enforcing total bans or age limits is practically impossible, and many teens will find ways to bypass restrictions.

Some countries, such as Brazil and France, are focusing on tighter regulations instead of a total ban. Governments and tech companies have implemented stricter rules regarding data privacy, parental controls, and company accountability. This recognizes the unavoidable role social media has on modern life, and understands that completely removing it is unrealistic. It hopes to decrease the unavoidable consequences while still allowing young people to benefit from online connection. However, even these regulations may be difficult to maintain, and will not solve the problem entirely.

One of the biggest challenges with digital limitations, whether they be a total ban or a partial restriction, is that they are easy to get around. This is not the first time social media apps have tried to limit users or content, as they have previously included birthday verifications or screen time limits. They have existed for years, yet most teens find loopholes and continue scrolling. In fact, restricting something too heavily often makes it more appealing for a young audience.

As the guidelines and controls get more intense, so will the attempts to overrule them. Ultimately, social media is not entirely good or entirely bad, even for adolescents. It can be used as a platform for connection and expression, or one of comparison and anxiety. While it has many real risks for young users, a complete ban altogether is unlikely to be a solution, as it sacrifices the many benefits, and may fail at reducing teen usage. A more effective approach may lie in balance. This includes implementing partial restrictions, holding companies accountable, and educating young users about online habits. As social media continues to evolve and further integrate itself into daily life, society must also adapt to ensure it remains a safe and positive space for the younger generations.



According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre

By Bruno Scanga
Financial Columnist

In 2023 there were over 62,000 reported fraud victims. Seniors in Canada are getting bilked out of more than \$500 million every year. It is estimated that as many as one in five seniors have lost money to fraudsters and most don't report it. Even though seniors today may be mentally sharper than ever, they are still the con artists' favorite target because they generally have more disposable cash and are often more trusting. Also, with our population living longer, there are more elders in their 80's and 90's who are vulnerable because they live alone, have a certain level of memory loss and can be confused or frightened by slick scammers.

Scam artists try their tricks on all age groups, but some of their cons they focus on seniors. Here are a few common scams targeting seniors:

Grandchild-in-trouble – Henry gets a call from what sounds like a grandson asking for some urgent financial help. Apparently traveling far from home, he needs bail money or emergency car repairs and asks for a wire transfer.

In a nasty new twist, crooks knew some things about the grandchild and used a software tool to impersonate their voice. They were told their grandchild had been kidnapped and demanded payment of ransom. Cunningly, the crooks earlier called the grandchild on their cell phone, impersonating the phone carrier, and asked them to turn it off for a maintenance check.

Protection – Wire payment or Bitcoin is the dead give-away. Never send money before confirming the grandchild's whereabouts and call police.

Phony bank official – Anne was bilked out of more than \$15,000 when she thought she was helping her bank catch a thieving teller. She was instructed to withdraw a large sum of cash from her account and deliver it to the 'bank official' at a mall in her neighborhood. He was well dressed and assured her that the funds would be deposited back to her account. Anne was told not to tell her bank because they didn't want to tip-off the teller, and he was able to get her to make two more withdrawals.

Protection – Do not give any personal information to someone claiming they represent your bank. Call the police.

Scareware – Shortly after David and Gail got their first computer, a message appeared on their screen telling them it was infected with a virus. They were invited to download a program for a small charge, giving the fraud artist their credit card information.

Protection – First thing, have Internet security software from one of the big-name providers installed. Set it to update regularly and ignore the phony pop-up messages.



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