

“The last 4 weeks have been spent without any access to Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat. I thought it would be a difficult thing for me to give up for my school assignment, even though I hadn’t realized just how much it would impact me....”

When I post my first update to social media after being gone for 30 days, I imagine it will start a little something like this. 30 days without social media. It’s hard to believe that something that didn’t even really exist 10 years ago has become such a huge part of my (and everyone else’s) life. Living without it has been interesting, challenging at first, and now, I hardly even notice.

If I were a client giving up an addictive substance, it might be beneficial for me to create a pro/cons list to determine the cost benefit of quitting that particular substance. In my mind, I have had an ongoing pro/cons list to the use social media. For the sake of documenting my experience, I feel like it would be beneficial to discuss those here.

First, we will discuss the pros of social media usage. Communication. The amount of people that can be reached at an extremely alarming rate is one of the biggest pros of social media. If someone is injured in a car accident, goes into the hospital, has a promotion at work, dies, gets married..... Social media gives us the ability to notify many people about these situations without having to call anyone specifically. Those who are interested in other’s lives will feel notified, those who aren’t so much will just scroll on by. News, restaurants, schools, they all communicate through social media. My childrens’ school gives updates that they don’t even email out or send information home through social media. To an extent, there is a need there. The ability to communicate information quickly across large quantities of people is a huge benefit of social media.

Free advertising: What a huge benefit for businesses!!! If someone posts that they go to a restaurant or ball game or comedy event, what a great way for the business to benefit from

the free advertising they receive from the poster. I know for me, seeing someone else go out and do something makes me interested in doing that thing. It “entices” me to explore that new avenue of different activities. All of the postings cost businesses nothing, and it effectively gets the word out through the best way possible: personal experience.

Personal outlet: This one is huge for me. I document my life, the good, the bad, the ugly, through social media. I don’t really care who responds, but I admittedly do it to entertain people and get a response out of them. I love feeling like I have made someone’s day, like I have reached them on a personal level even though we are miles apart. The feeling I get making someone else smile or laugh or feel empathy, that feeling keeps me posting. I thrive on it.

However, even with these positive “pros” to social media, there are definitely cons to consider as well. One huge con of social media I have observed is personal involvement and connection. When I say this, I mean to those around me, in the same room as me, sitting across from me at a restaurant. So much time is spent looking down, people forget to look straight at those around them. I am not proud to admit that I spend entirely too much time on my phone. My “screen time” usage has consistently dropped 77% from when I began this project. My daily usage has gone down over 6 hours a day. What in the world have I been doing for 6 hours a day on social media?! Missing out on life..... That’s what I have been doing.

Texting/ social media while driving, I am not proud to admit that I do it, and I have been doing it entirely too much. My phone usage while driving has gone down to practically none. No Facebooking, no Snapchat filtering, no Instagramming while driving. I am so much more aware and feel safer. I think we could all benefit from quitting social media and driving. Even though it’s not texting, it is equally as dangerous. I don’t even understand why I did it. I certainly feel really stupid to admit it.

I am unsure exactly which category to place the “news and political” aspect of social media. By pointing it out as a con, I am saying that I am not in the know, right now. As a pro, I do not have the negativity of the news and political arguments in my face constantly. I feel less stressed out mentally because I have not had the negativity being fed through the phone all day. It’s different than the “things friends post”. It is legitimate trash. People arguing with each other, calling each other names, placing blame on each other. It’s exhausting. When I get back on social media, I might actually stop “following” news outlets. Help keep peace in my soul. However, I am also completely unaware of what is going on in the world right now, because there aren’t many different avenues that aren’t social media out there anymore, and once again, I refuse to watch regular daily news on television,

I had thought that I would struggle with removing social media outlets from my life. I did come to the realization that I spend entirely too much time engrossed in it. I have also discovered that I don’t need to use it as much as I have been. It would be beneficial for me to find a happy medium for appropriate usage. I don’t need to check it for 40 minutes in bed at night. I don’t need to check it while driving or riding in the car. I certainly don’t need to spend every moment I am sitting on the couch checking it. Reading books has been helpful. I still have books to get through so I have to finish those.

I should be here, now, for my children more. I should be more connected to my husband instead of staring at my phone on date night. It has been over 21 days since I quit my addiction. I went through the withdrawals. I substituted different outlets to replace the ones I was taking away. I struggled with searching for the locations on my phone where the applications were placed and not finding them there to hit. I broke away from my phone. I disconnected.

My husband has been getting messages from some of his family members stating they miss me on social media because he never posts updates of our kids and they miss seeing our

childrens' faces. I guess when one person goes through withdrawal and quits a substance, it really does impact other people involved in the user's life.

For my case, the pros definitely outweigh the cons to quitting social media. I have the desire to change, I am currently in the action stage of change. I admit that I intend to relapse here in the next few days, as even though the assignment is over, I haven't hit the 30 days, and I intend to complete the entire time, and when I do, I will download the applications, sign back in, and scroll away. However, I also have decided that I would like to maintain a healthy relationship with social media, and want to remove a lot of the negativity from it. I believe my life will be better for making these changes.