myHealth CONNECTIONS
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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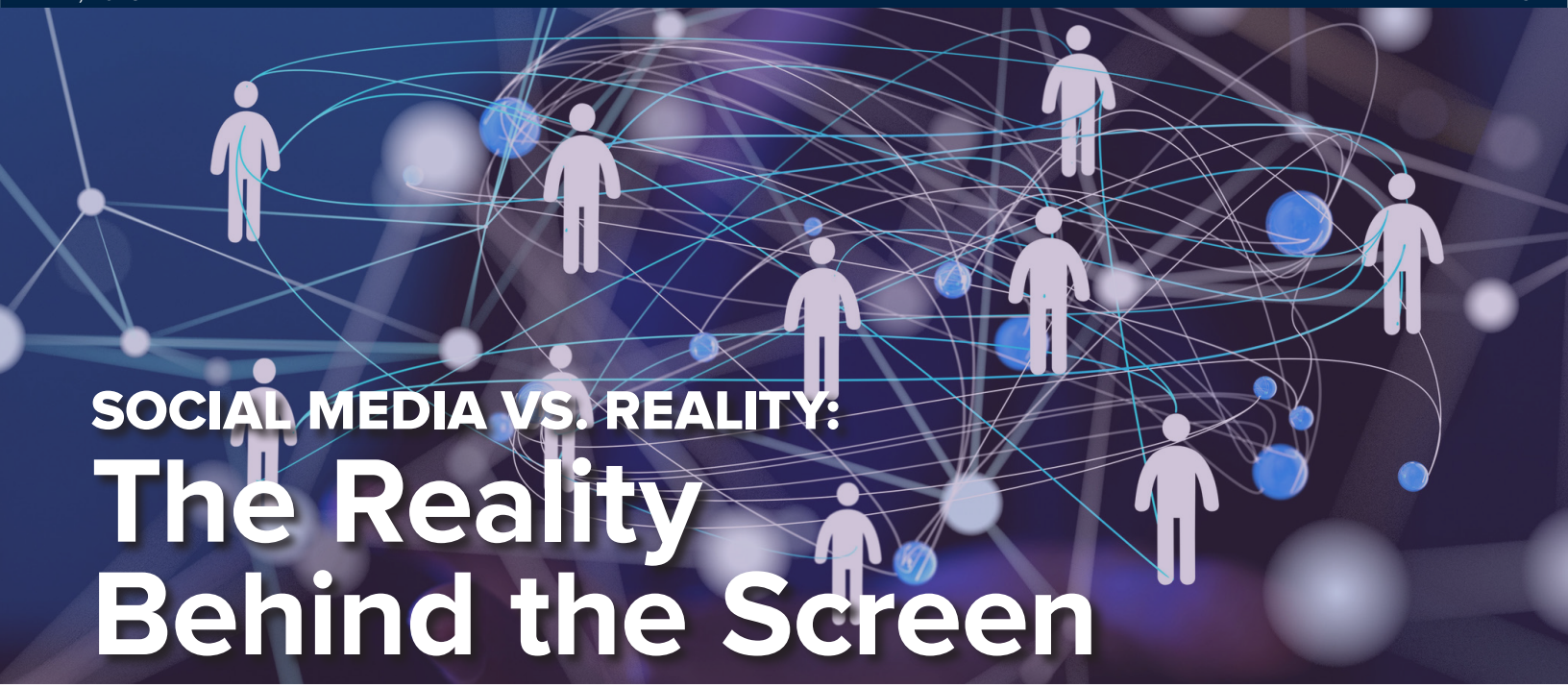
Wellness Wednesdays

MAY, 2025 WEEK 3



SOCIAL MEDIA VS. REALITY: The Reality Behind the Screen

Social media gives us instant access to people's lives, from vacation photos to career achievements. However, by now, hopefully it's a known truth that social media showcases perfectly curated highlight reels rather than the full picture. Filters, editing apps, and selective posting can make everyday life look perfect — leaving many people feeling like they don't measure up.

The constant comparison and pressure to live up to unrealistic standards can negatively impact mental health. Feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and low self-esteem are all common side effects of too much time spent scrolling. Recognizing the difference between reality and what's portrayed online is an essential step toward protecting your well-being.

THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media can be a fun way to stay connected, studies show that excessive use can contribute to:

1. **Increased Anxiety and Depression.** Comparing your life to others' highlight reels can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. Additionally, endless scrolling can create an addictive loop, triggering dopamine responses in the brain that can lead to feelings of anxiety and depression.
2. **Sleep Disruptions.** Do you ever catch yourself checking social media in the middle of the night? Late-night scrolling can interfere with sleep, contributing to fatigue and poor mental health. Some apps even set up push notifications to lure users in during the night, which can lead to sacrificing hours of sleep with hours of doom scrolling.

FOLLOW THE MOUSE:
We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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3. **Loneliness and Isolation.** But wait – isn't social media supposed to be...social? Paradoxically, too much time online can lead to disconnection from real-life social interactions. One study performed two years after the pandemic even found that increased use of social media led to increased feelings of loneliness.
4. **Negative Body Image.** On social media, what you see is not what you get. Filters, Photoshop, and heavy editing have become the norm, which can distort body image perceptions, particularly among young people. It's proven that reducing time spent on social media can greatly improve self-esteem and body image.

ARE YOU SAYING TO DELETE SOCIAL MEDIA?

You don't have to quit social media entirely to protect your mental health. Instead, try these strategies to create healthier habits:

Curate your feed:
Follow accounts that uplift and inspire you, like the MBC Facebook page. Unfollow or mute accounts that make you feel negative about yourself.

Set time limits:
Use built-in screen time trackers or apps to limit how much time you spend on social media each day.

Take Digital detoxes:
Set aside regular screen-free periods to disconnect and recharge. Consider a "tech-free" evening or a weekend away from social media.

Practice mindful scrolling:
Be aware of how social media makes you feel. If you notice anxiety or comparison creeping in, it may be time to log off.

Engage, don't just scroll:
Use social media to connect meaningfully with others instead of mindlessly scrolling. Leave positive comments, share uplifting content, and engage in genuine conversations.

BEING SOCIAL WITHOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Taking breaks from screens opens opportunities to reconnect with yourself and the world around you. Engaging in hobbies and real-world experiences can reduce stress and improve overall well-being. Here are a few screen-free activities to try:

1. **Go outside.** Spend time in nature with a walk, hike, or bike ride. Fresh air and physical activity can lift your mood and boost energy.
2. **Get creative.** Explore writing, painting, crafting, or playing music. Creative expression is a great stress reliever.
3. **Cook a meal.** Try a new recipe, host a small dinner gathering, or enjoy a peaceful solo meal without screens.
4. **Practice mindfulness.** Meditation, yoga, or simple breathing exercises can reduce anxiety and help you stay grounded.
5. **Connect in person.** Plan a coffee date, attend a local event, or volunteer. Real-life social connections are vital for emotional well-being.

KNOW WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT

If social media is taking a toll on your mental health and limiting your enjoyment of daily life, it may be time to seek support. Symptoms like constant comparison, low self-esteem, or withdrawal from social interactions can signal deeper issues.

The ComPsych EAP offers confidential counseling and mental health support to help you navigate these challenges. Speaking with a mental health professional can help you regain confidence and build a healthier mindset. Take time out to investigate resources through **ComPsych EAP website**. For 24/7 live support, call **1-800-890-1213** to access mental health care and a wide range of additional services.

REMEMBER, YOU ARE IN CONTROL

Social media is a tool — how you use it can either support or harm your mental well-being. By setting boundaries, curating your feed, and making time for offline activities, you can maintain a balanced relationship with technology.

Remember that what you see online is rarely the whole story. Your worth isn't defined by likes, comments, or filtered photos. Prioritize your mental health, find joy in real-world experiences, and embrace the reality of your own unique journey.

For additional support and mental health resources, reach out to **ComPsych EAP**. Support is also available by calling 1-800-890-1213. Taking care of your mind is one of the best things you can do for yourself — on and off the screen.care of your mind is one of the best things you can do for yourself — on and off the screen.

SOURCES: *Naslund et. al.*, *UC Davis*, *Utah.gov*, *PubMed*, *APA*

Share with your colleagues so they too can find a healthy social media balance in 2025!

A Healthier Tomorrow Starts Today!

Save the dates!
Save the dates!
Save the dates!
Save the dates!
Save the dates!

JUNE 2025

PURPOSE · PHYSICAL · FINANCIAL · COMMUNITY · SOCIAL

JUNE 3-13: The Countdown Begins!

President Preckwinkle invites you to the
2025 Cook County Employee Health Fairs!

Wellness is not **one-size-fits-all**—it's personal, and this year's Health Fairs are designed with ***you*** in mind.

Explore interactive experiences, educational activities, and exciting giveaways that support your unique health journey.

Bring your Cook County Employee ID—and a co-worker. See you there!

On-site Events

TUESDAY, JUNE 3 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Juvenile Temporary Detention Center Auditorium 1100 S. Hamilton Ave.	**THURSDAY, JUNE 5** 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Stroger Hospital Lower-Level Cafeteria 1969 W. Ogden Ave.
TUESDAY, JUNE 10 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Cook County Building 7th Floor 118 N. Clark St.	**FRIDAY, JUNE 13** 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Criminal Courthouse 2nd Floor Cafeteria 2650 S. California Ave.

Virtual Events

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 11-11:45 a.m. 2-2:45 p.m.	**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11** 9:30-10:15 a.m.; 11-11:45 a.m. 2-2:45 p.m.

Connect with your myHealth Connections community on Facebook for the latest 2025 health fairs updates and more.

SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR MOBILE DEVICE

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BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois