

THE PROBLEM

- Let's first review a bit of evidence that life satisfaction is suffering.
- We are not looking to drown ourselves in research statistics.
- I'll share data from a few studies that bubble to the top for me.
- My intention is to provide you with some evidence-based context for the problem before we move into the reasons it's a problem and what to do about it.



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THE PROBLEM

- Data from the National Survey Monitoring the Future (which has happened every year since 1976)
- Data indicates that life satisfaction for High School Seniors plummeted to all-time lows between 2012-2015 (Twenge, 2017)
- (Keep in mind, the first smartphone was introduced January 9th 2007)



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THE PROBLEM

- Four recent studies suggest social media and smartphone dependency are strongly related to unhappiness
- 1 with college students and 1 with adults, both monitoring mood and Facebook use
- 1 with adults assigned to stop using Facebook for a week
- And 1 with young adults monitoring loneliness and depressive symptoms



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THE PROBLEM

- STUDY #1: College students surveyed over two weeks were asked to rate their mood and Facebook use. The research found that:
 - The more they had used Facebook, the unhappier they later felt
 - Feeling unhappy didn't lead to Facebook use, their use of Facebook lead to unhappiness (Kross, 2013)



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THE PROBLEM

- STUDY #2: Adults surveyed over two weeks were asked to rate their mood and Facebook use. The research found that:
 - More Facebook use led to lower mental health and life satisfaction at the next assessment
 - After they interacted with a friend in person, their mental health and life satisfaction improved (Shakya & Christakis, 2017)



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THE PROBLEM

- STUDY #3: 1095 Danish adults were randomly assigned to either stop or continue using Facebook for a week. Those who stopped using Facebook fared significantly better than those who kept using:
 - 36% FEWER were lonely
 - 33% FEWER were depressed
 - 9% MORE were happy (Tromholt, 2016)



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THE PROBLEM

- Study #4: 346 individuals ages 18-20 were surveyed with questions designed to measure loneliness, depressive symptoms, and their daily smartphone use.
- The results showed that smartphone dependency precedes depression and loneliness (University of Arizona, 2019).



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THE PROBLEM

- Risk for unhappiness is highest for younger teens
 - 8th graders who spent 10 or more hours a week (that's less than an hour and a half per day) on social networking sites were 56% more likely to be unhappy, compared to:
 - 39% for 10th graders
 - 14% for 12th graders (Twenge, 2017)



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THE PROBLEM

- Now that you have a little more context around the problem, let's explore the reasons we are seeing this problem in our kids.



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- We will review the following 5 reasons why life satisfaction is decreasing:
- Social comparison
- Adolescent Egocentrism
- Paleolithic brain and social approval
- Competition and inferiority
- Lack of solitude



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Social comparison
 - Time is spent online comparing themselves or being compared
 - Girls are especially vulnerable
 - Girls are asked to compare in ways that boys are not (Sales, 2016)



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Adolescent Egocentrism
 - Imaginary Audience
 - Personal Fable (Sanrock, 2004)



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- The Paleolithic Brain and The Need for Social Approval (Newport, 2019)
 - We are social beings
 - New technology has hijacked our deep vulnerability to be connected to others
 - Consider feedback buttons on social media
- The universal urge to immediately check a text message



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Increased sense of competition and inferiority
 - Girls are bombarded by and compared to idealized images
 - "I am never going to look like that."
 - Shame intensifies if the images are of their peers
- Pressure to keep up is more present in day-to-day life (Sales, 2016)



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Increased sense of competition and inferiority
- Even if images are clearly photoshopped, the pressure is still there to compete for likes
- Number of selfie likes "never feels like enough"
- Teens feel inept as people only post the positive, beautiful aspects of life (Sales, 2016)



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Lack of Solitude (Newport, 2019)
- Distracts from the ability to develop a rich inner life
- Can reduce or eliminate solitude and its benefits
- Solitude and its benefits
- Solitude deprivation



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REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Quick recap, we reviewed the following 5 reasons:
- Social comparison
- Adolescent Egocentrism
- Paleolithic brain and social approval
- Competition and inferiority
- Lack of solitude



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"My Instagram is really good. It pays to have friends who are professional photographers."

- Dr. B private practice client (teenager)

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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- This section covers major concepts for how to nurture life satisfaction
- It is not intended to be prescriptive
- It is intended to provide guidance toward your own personal strategies



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• We will review the following 5 ways to positively affect life satisfaction:

- Meaning
- Mindfulness
- Self-reflection
- Monitoring
- Solitude



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• Create meaning (Dr. Rangan Chatterjee framework, L.I.V.E.)

- Love
- Intention
- Vision
- Engagement



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• Practice mindfulness

- Monitor negative & comparative thoughts and self talk
- Remember that most people mostly post only the good in life
- Think about positive aspects of life - a grateful list
- Put down the phone!
- Practice breathing



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Practice self-reflection
 - What does it matter?
 - What happens if you don't keep up?
 - Why do you feel this way?
- Journal



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Monitor yourself
 - It seems stressful, like a constant competition
 - Recognize these feelings in your body
 - Don't allow that feeling of being on edge to become the norm
- Put down the phone



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Increase times in solitude
 - Leave your phone at home
 - Take a walk (without your phone)
 - Write a letter to yourself (Newport, 2019)



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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• We just reviewed 5 ways to positively affect life satisfaction, including:

- Meaning
- Mindfulness
- Self-reflection
- Monitoring
- Solitude



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"A contented mind is the greatest blessing a person can enjoy in this world."

Joseph Addison

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