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With all due respect to its wide range of extraordinary benefits, social media like any new technology or innovation, comes with its own potential problems. More so, if the consumer of these social networking site is a teenager.

Mark Zuckerberg once said that if Facebook were a country, it would be the eighth largest nation in the world. Today, approximately 900 million people use Facebook in more than 70 different languages across the globe. Another such so-called nation is Twitter aka the SMS feature of the Internet with over 140 million active users. Twitter is known to generate more than 340 millions tweets daily, while handles over 1.6 billion search queries every day. Facebook and twitter are just two of the major forms of social media. However, the figures highlight the point that social media is today one of the most powerful tools for communication by bringing the fundamental shifts in communication behaviour.

Social networking sites seem to be an integral part of our modern culture that helps us communicate more things to more people unlike ever before. Therefore, if you do not have any social media account, well... it may simply sound that you do not have a social lifestyle... and in the terms of teens of this digital era, its like - 'you are not at all happening!'

With all its charm, Social media has a great influence on teens since beginning. In this digital era, being social means being social media savvy. Social media has surely initiated the rapidly changing communication ecosystem, wherein there are more number of things communicated to more number of audiences, than ever before. This face of communication has been up to the mark in terms of understanding the wide range of rapidly changing user wants and successfully fulfilling the needs accordingly and sophisticatedly. The widespread social networking phenomenon that has completely shifted the communication module from many-to-many along with the wide range of affordable internet services as well as internet access devices and has led to altogether a new era of social networking.

Gone are the days when outdoor activities, parties, picnics, etc. were the agendas in a teenager's lifestyle. Today, just Internet access helps you stay connected with your circle, no matter in whichever corner of the world you are!

The author is chairman and managing director of eScan, a company that offers anti-virus, anti-spam, content security and network intrusion prevention solutions.

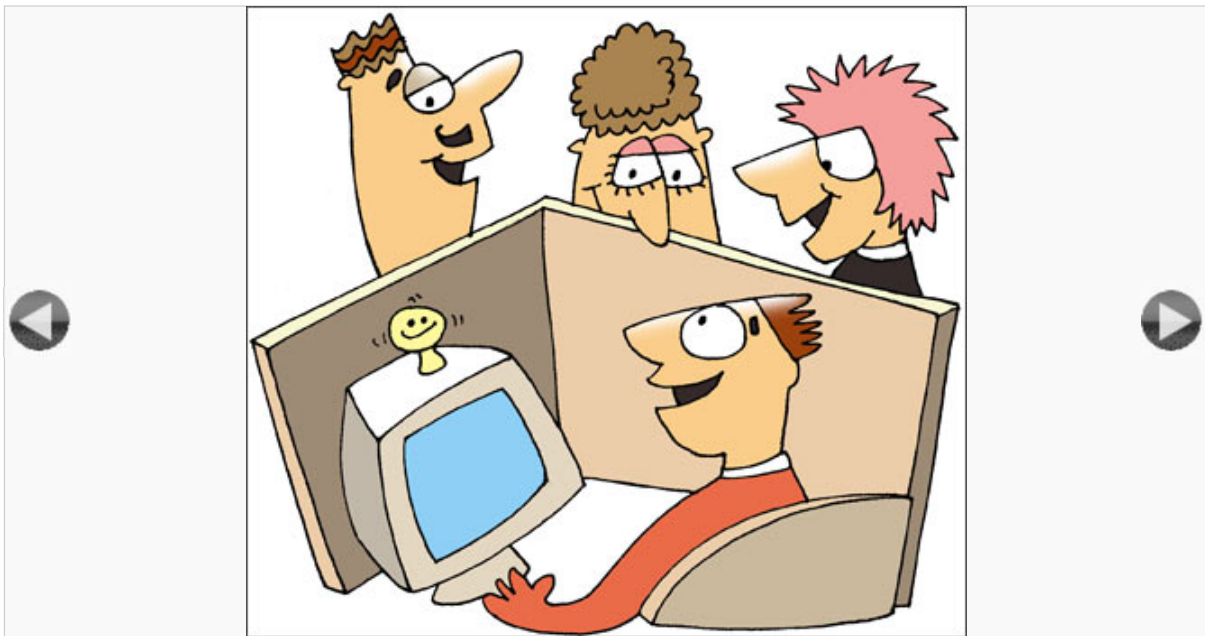


Problem # 1: Isolation from the real-world social life

With social networking sites gaining more and more popularity amongst the teens, today they spend more time online and less time interacting with people face-to-face. This means they tend to spend less time, rather negligible time with families and friends to experience and learn the family values and right attitude, understand feeling and thoughts of each other, and tune into family customs.

Social networking sites majorly engage teens in wasting their time in activities that are actually not productive. Hence, it badly affects their social, moral, emotional development and their overall personality development. It keeps them away from learning character skills such as compassion, tolerance, empathy, sharing and caring, communication, respecting people, maintaining relationships, emotional intelligence, leadership or dealing with real life complications, etc.

As reported by studies of various scientists, such social isolation can lead to many physical, psychological and emotional problems. Insomnia, stress, depression and anxiety are most general problems faced by teens these days in which social media plays a vital role.



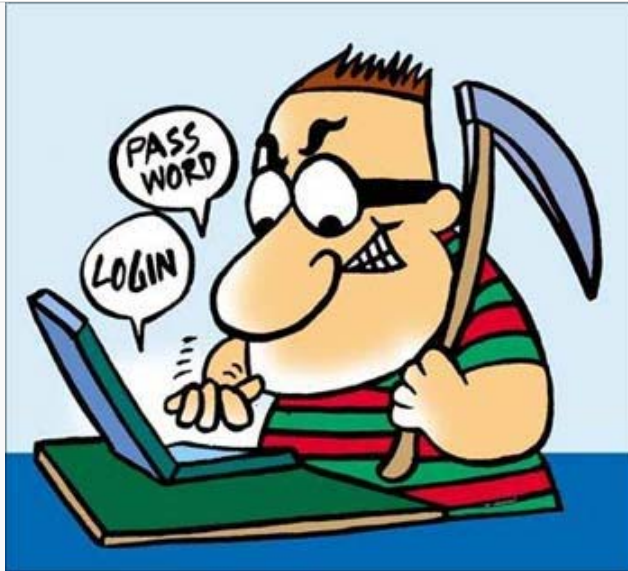
Problem # 2: Inappropriate sharing of Information

The key aspect of social networking web sites involve sharing of personal information. Be it creating a profile or posting real-time updates. Some or the other way, every one in the network is updated about the happenings in your life.

Usually, teens get so much involved that they forget to analyse and draw a line between what kind of information has to be shared publicly. Any content posted online once, stays online forever. Even though if we delete any post or photograph that is once posted on these social networking sites, the content is not completely deleted from the Internet and can be retrieved even after deletion.

Due to such inappropriate personal information sharing, teens face issues such as cyberbullying, mental and sexual harassment, vulnerability to financial predators. In many cases, it is found that teens lose their jobs in case their employers access and find any irrelevant content that gives bad impression of the individual.

Teens that become victims of cyberbullying often suffer from depression, de-motivation, low self-esteem, mental disorders which leads to affect their academics as well as personal life.



[More](#)

Problem # 3: Vulnerability to cyber attacks

With the online traffic on social networking sites booming they are ocean of personal information. These sites are the favourite focus of cyber criminals. Various kind of cyber threats such as identity thefts, hack attacks, spam attacks, phishing attacks, drive-by-downloads attacks, etc. are very common today on social networking sites.