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SafetyMAGAZINE





PRIME MINISTER

## Message from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to SOS Safety Magazine for their role in the education of Canada's young people on pressing and relevant issues that affect our youth in every corner of this country.

Since its inaugural publication in 2002, SOS Safety Magazine has gained renown as an innovative forum to spark a discussion on the challenges that face our young Canadians. The critical and engaging issues captured in this magazine, which range from health, suicide, bullying and relationships, help our youth navigate an often challenging time in their lives.

I believe that young Canadians are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today, and it is important that they see the issues significant to them reflected in the media. Publications such as SOS Safety Magazine provide an important toolset for our youth to activate their leadership potential.

Thank you to the team at SOS Safety Magazine for their efforts to educate young Canadians. I wish them all the best, as we look forward to many more years of their relevant and engaging coverage.

A handwritten signature of Justin Trudeau in black ink, featuring a stylized 'J' and 'T'.

Justin Trudeau

Ottawa 2016



# DIGITAL EDITION Fall 2018

Published by:  
**SOS Communications Ltd.**



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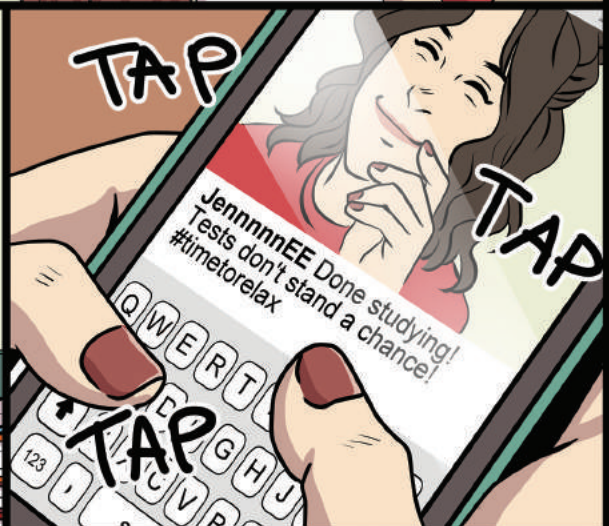
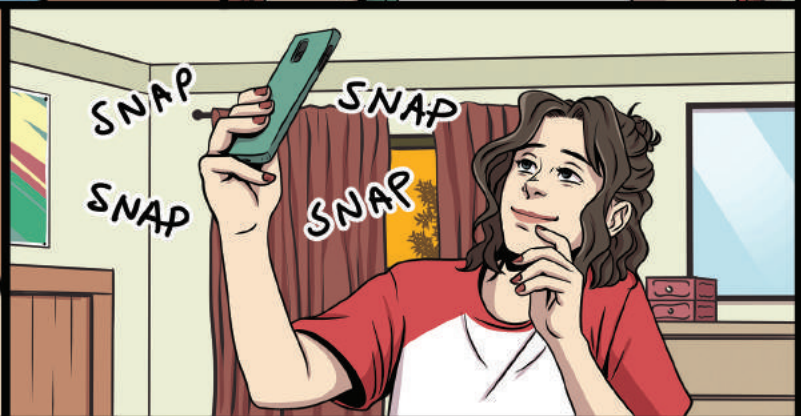
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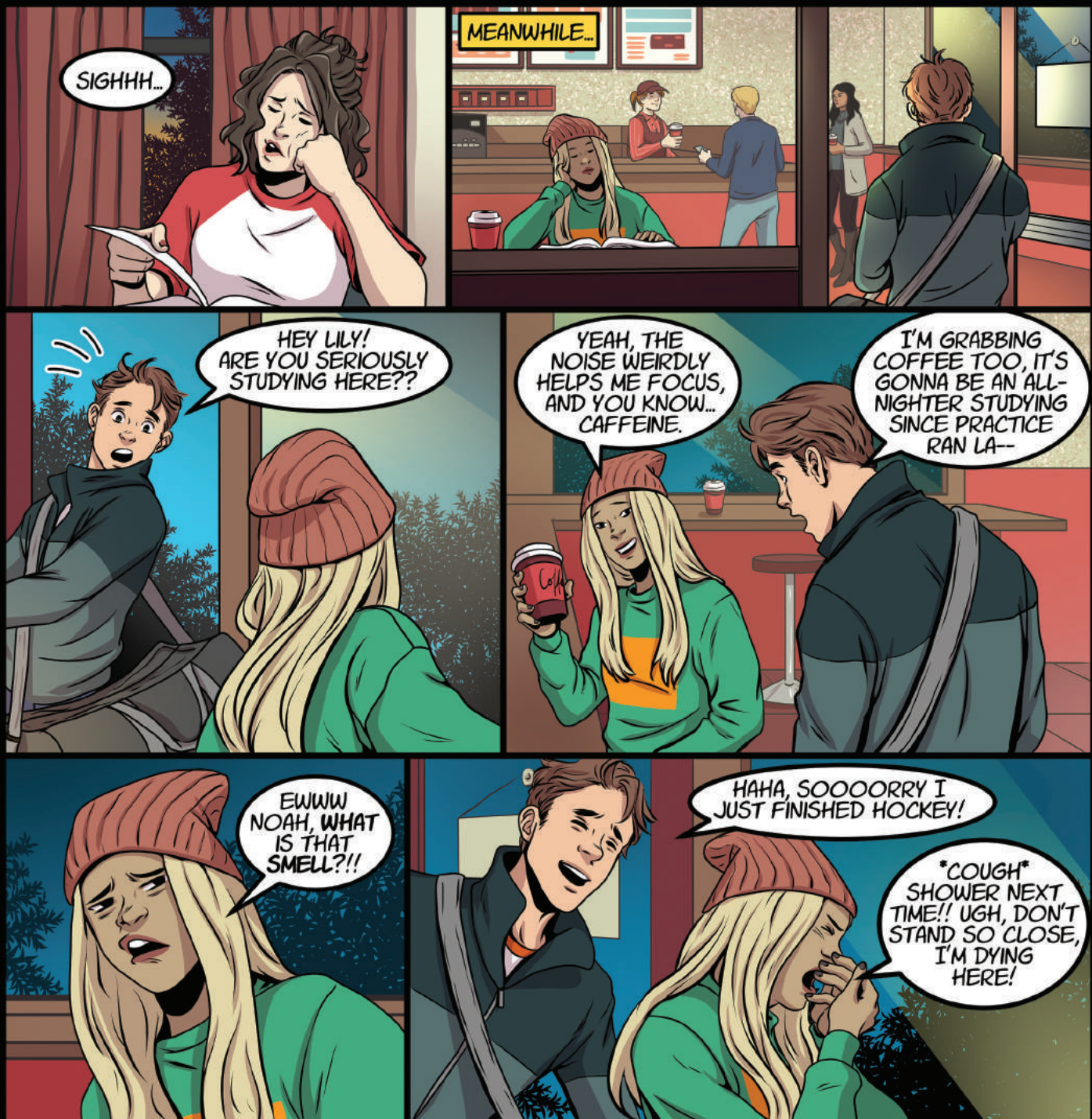
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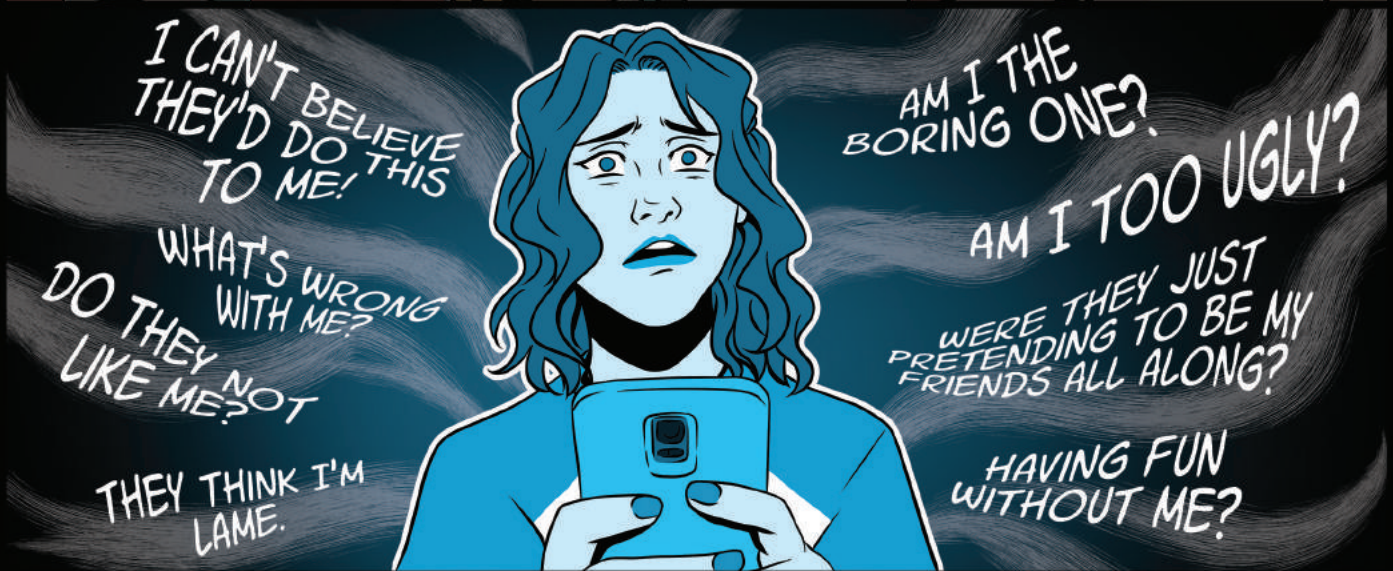
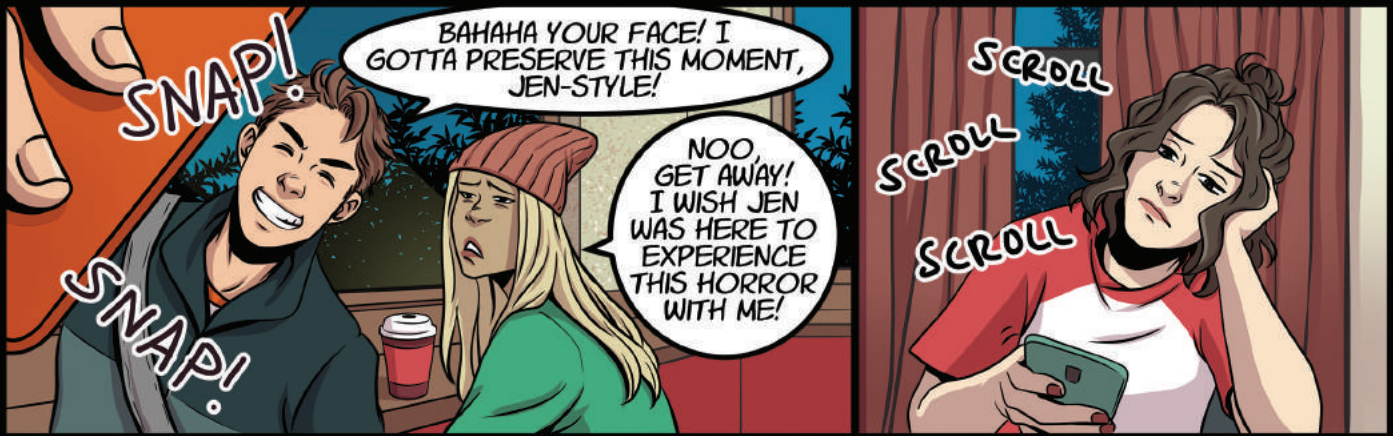
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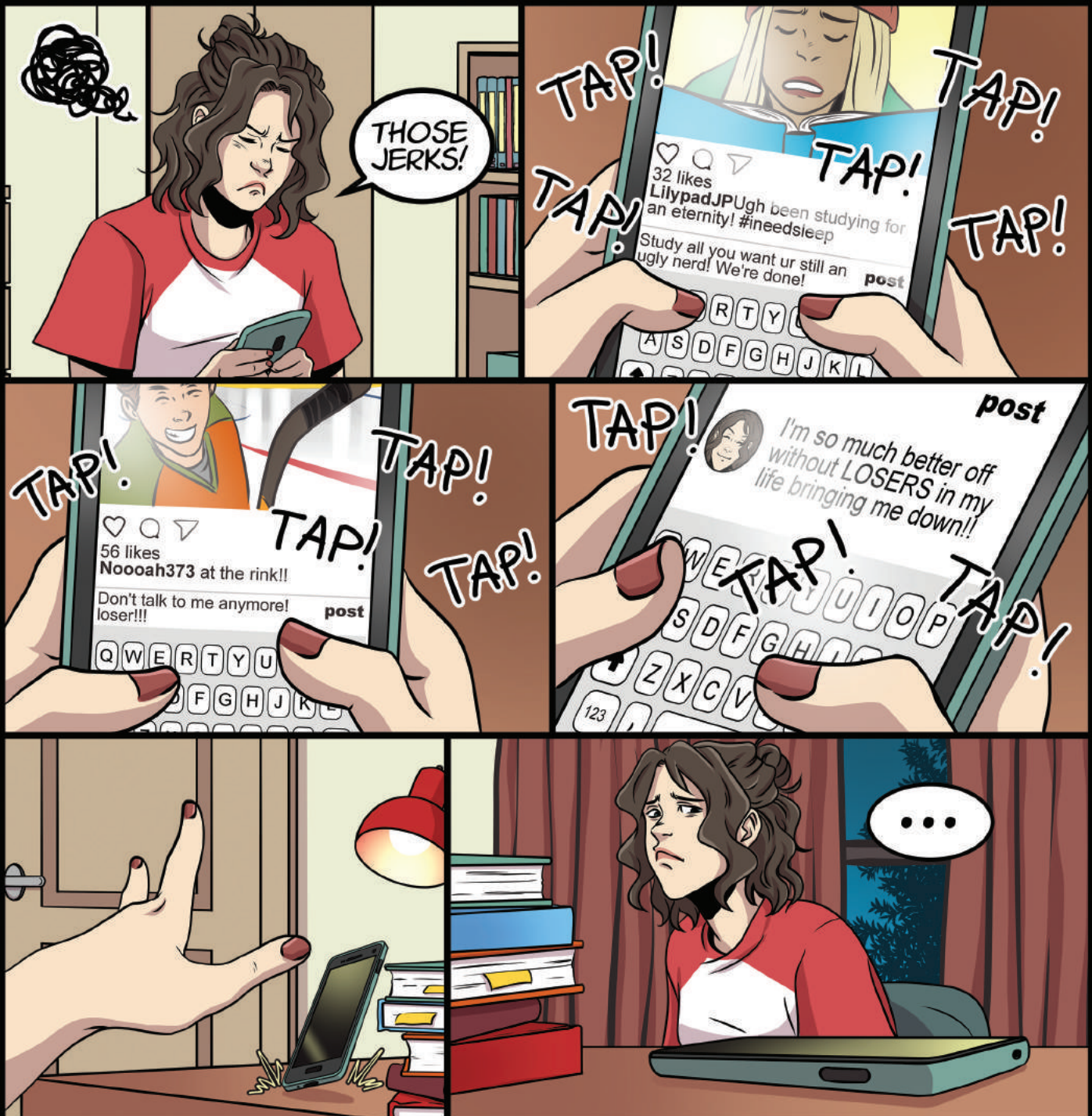


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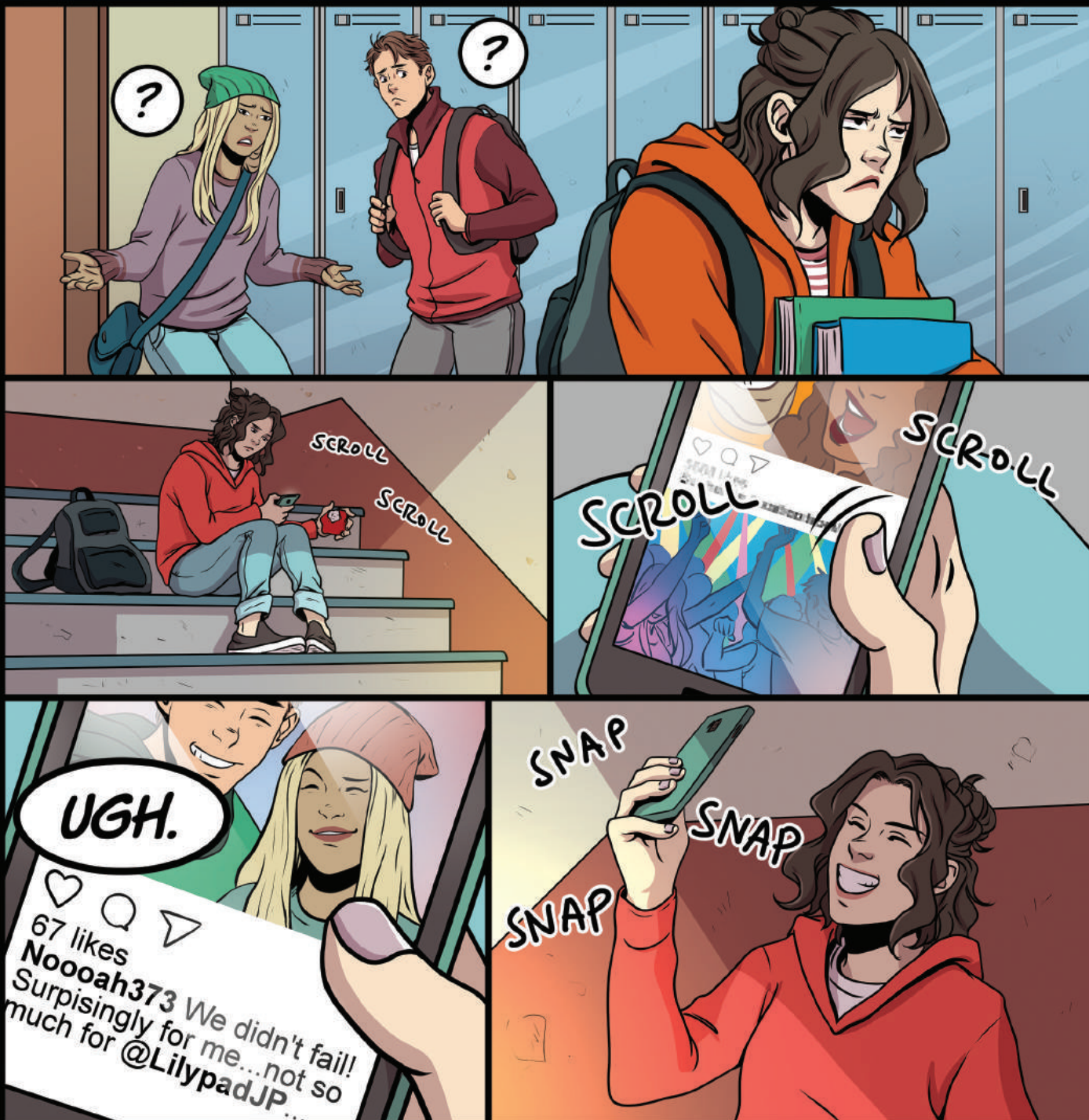
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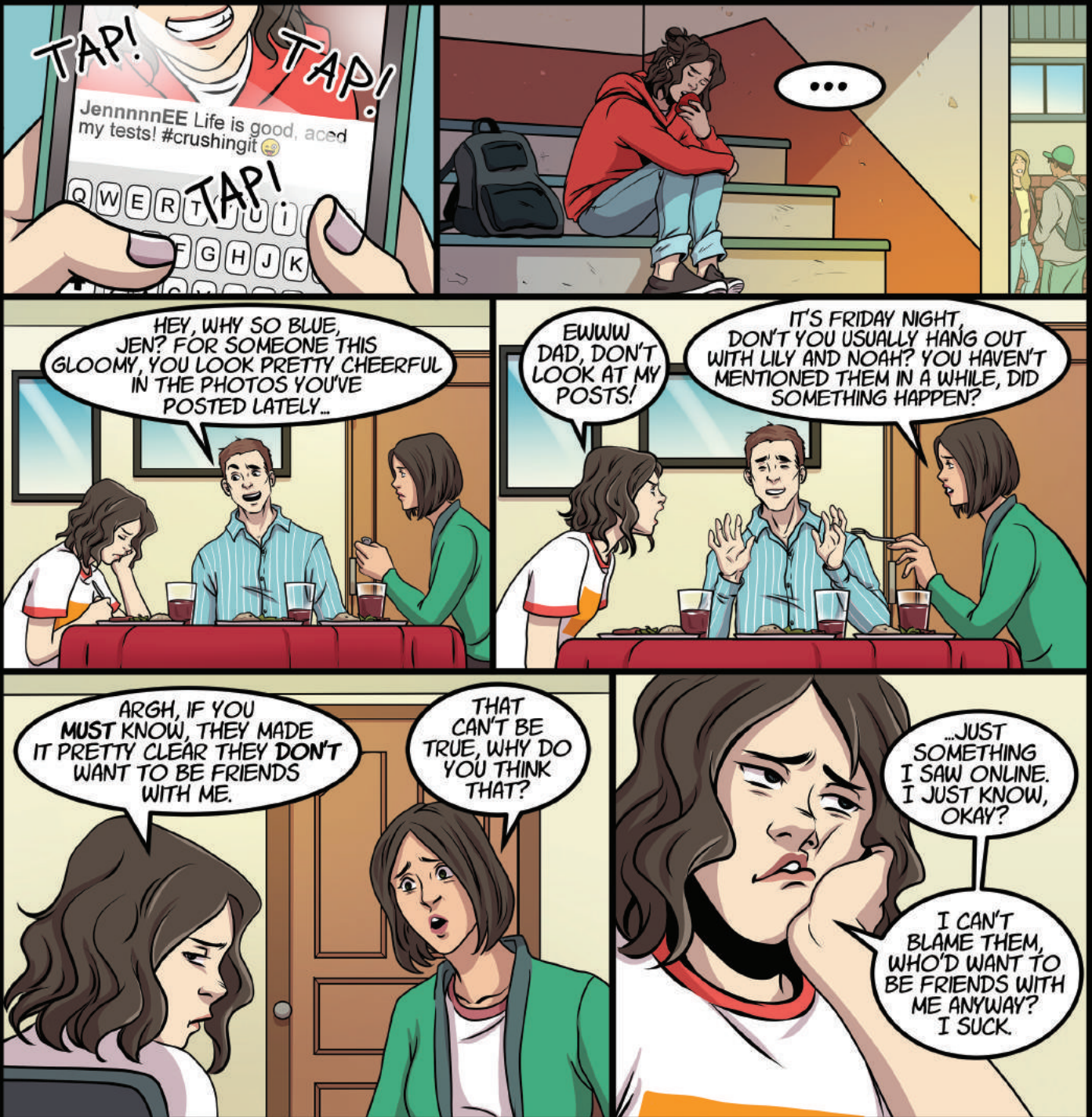
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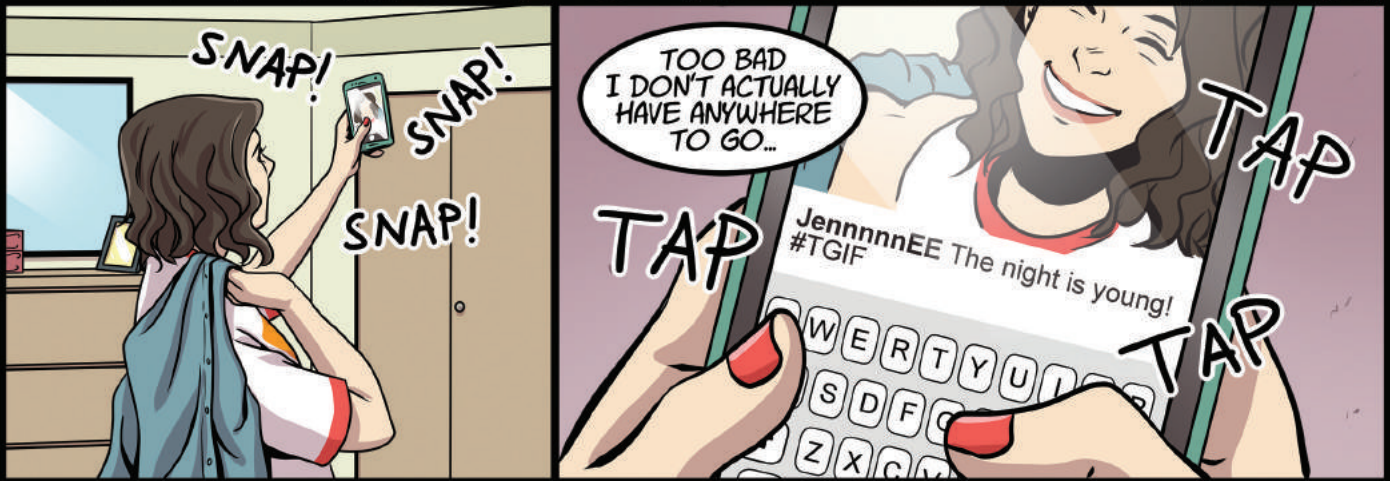
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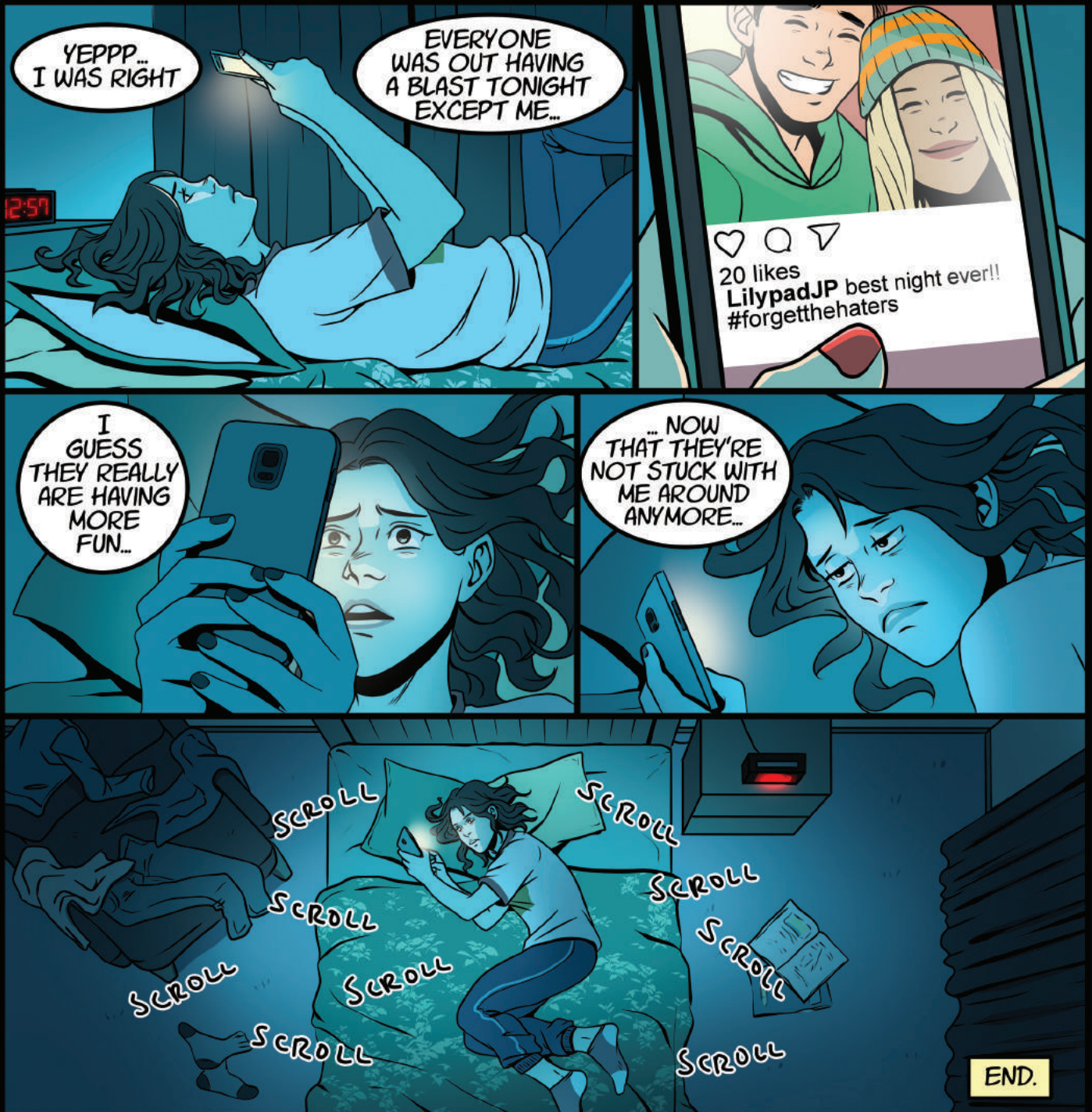
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A woman with blonde hair is lying in bed, partially covered by a dark blue blanket. She is looking at her smartphone, which is held in her hands. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a bedroom at night.

# 6 SIGNS SOCIAL MEDIA IS DAMAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Social media allows us to connect with the world in some pretty amazing ways. It's easier than ever to keep up with what friends and family are doing, and it can be a lot of fun to share life with people with only a few taps on a screen.

But too much of any good thing can be dangerous, and social media is no exception. In fact, social media can be pretty harmful to your mental health.

Here are six ways to tell if social media is hurting your mental health:

## 1: YOU FIND YOURSELF COMPARING

Social media is where people share their best moments: the things they want others to see.

Your friends will post their accomplishments: their good grades and game-winning goals. They'll post the fun things they do and the things that made them laugh. And it's tempting to believe that their lives are only the fun

moments, with none of the un-exciting things you do each day that aren't worth posting about.

Don't believe it. When you start comparing your life to what you see others posting on social media, you're comparing their highlight reels to your behind-the-scenes. You're guaranteed to feel worse about yourself and your life if you make comparisons like this.

Most of what goes on social media is carefully chosen, heavily filtered, and looks better than it really is. Instead of comparing someone else's best moments with your everyday ones, remember that social media doesn't show you everything – only what your friends want you to see.

## 2: IT'S ALL YOU WANT TO DO

Social media is great for staying connected, especially with people you don't get to see as often. But too much of it isn't so great.

If you're constantly checking your phone (even when you are with friends and family), or you scroll through social media for hours at a time, you may be getting a little too attached. And being too attached to social media will hurt your mental health.

Real, solid friendships can be great for mental health and self-esteem. Trying new and fun things is also a great mental health booster. But you'll miss out on a lot of that if you're glued to social media.

If you notice that you're spending more time looking at your phone than the people you're with, you may be doing some damage to your mental health.

Try putting your phone on silent or out of reach when you're with friends and family. Instead, just enjoy being with them and doing whatever you're doing. You'll feel better and you'll create memories that will always be around to cheer you up.



### 3: YOU CAN'T GET ENOUGH LIKES

We all know the feeling of having someone important to us like or comment on something we've posted. It feels great to think that others care about our lives and what we're doing.

And it is good to share your life with your friends and family.

On the other hand, needing social media likes in order to feel good could be a sign that something is wrong.

If the only thing that makes you feel loved, interesting, and cared for is the number of double-taps you get on an Instagram photo, you may be searching for validation in the wrong place.

Validation from social media likes is temporary. So it's important to find validation in things that are more secure and long-lasting. Without something meaningful that gives you purpose, you'll go back to feeling low after your post has stopped getting likes.

### 4: YOU OFTEN FEEL ALONE

It seems kind of backwards – online, you're connected to hundreds of people, but offline, you're lonely.

But Instagram followers aren't necessarily the same thing as friends.

If you feel lonely when you haven't checked social media in a while, social media could be hurting your mental health.

It's important to have relationships with people outside of social media. Having someone you can

talk to about the things that are going on in your life and to do things with will help you feel less lonely.

That doesn't mean you can't connect with people on social media. It means that social media shouldn't be the only way you connect.

It's important not to confuse social media followers and friends with genuine friendship and love. Real friends will help keep your mental health strong and your loneliness at bay. Social media-only friends will do the opposite.

### 5: YOU'RE AFRAID TO BE YOURSELF

Social media has magnified the ways we go out of our way to impress others. Instagram filters, photo editing tools, deleting and re-writing captions a hundred times before posting... There are a million ways that what we post online doesn't reflect our true selves.

Our true, natural selves can be scary in the social media world. Because everyone looks their best online, it's easy to try to show off our most flattering angles, funniest captions, and best moments.

And even then, we filter, edit, and tweak.

But being so careful to only show what's best could reveal a deeper fear – a fear of being ourselves, of being real, because we're afraid that others may not like the real.

No one can be most comfortable when trying to be someone other than themselves: so don't. It's hard to keep up and only ends up making you feel worse. If

social media pressures you to be something other than your real self, it could end up really hurting your mental health.

### 6: THE FOMO IS REAL

Fear Of Missing Out becomes so much more prevalent and feels stronger because of social media.

Because we can see so much of what our friends and family are doing, it's easy to feel like we're missing out on the good stuff. Instead of participating, we watch fun things happen via our phones.

If you worry about missing posts when you can't check social media for a few hours, or if you're jealous of the things you see on social media, your FOMO could be hurting you.

FOMO means that you're more concerned about what other people are doing than what you're doing. And too much FOMO can lead to jealousy, bitterness, resentment, and low self-esteem. All of these things are dangerous to your mental health.

Don't give in to FOMO. If you're offline and afraid of missing something good, it might be a sign that it's time to unplug for a while. A Better Approach

Your mental health is important and social media can have an impact on it, so it's important to be careful. Enjoy social media for what it is – a great way to connect with those you care about – but slow down or stop when you notice these signs.

Article written by **Nancy Razkalla**



# 6 BOUNDARIES AROUND MEDIA CONSUMPTION TEENS WILL ACTUALLY AGREE WITH



Media can be a great tool for learning and staying connected, and nobody knows how to use it better than today's teens. But too much of any good thing can be unhealthy.

So many different apps and devices beg for our teens' time and attention, and it can be hard to keep up with it all. How much is too much? It's tempting to go to extremes: either give our kids as much freedom as they want or be too restrictive.

So how do we set healthy boundaries for our teens' media consumption, and still let them have fun with it?

## USE MEDIA AS A REWARD

A treat always feels best when it's earned.

Give your teens the opportunity to earn time with their favourite devices, shows, or apps when they do a good thing. For example, suggest that they can earn an extra half hour of Netflix by finishing all their chores by a

certain time, like before supper. Or offer to let them keep their phone in their room later on a night they help a younger sibling with their homework.

Rewards should add a little fun to the boundaries you've already set. Your teens will get to enjoy media within healthy boundaries, be thrilled with the extra privileges they earn and be eager to do the less-fun things in order to earn a reward.



## HAVE A “BINGE DAY”

Once a week, once a month, or whenever fits your schedule, set up a “binge day”. This is the one day that you and your teens can indulge in some extra media fun.

If your regular rule is to spend two hours of non-school-related screen time per day, suggest that every Saturday, your teen gets an extra hour. Or, set up one day a month where all limits are doubled for an extra special treat.

“Binge days” will look different for every family, and should be used carefully. But, they are opportunities that your teen will really look forward to. All the while, they’ll maintain healthy standards of media consumption on regular days.

## FOLLOW YOUR OWN RULES

Nobody wants to follow someone who won’t stand by their own rules.

If the rule is that your teen only checks social media after finishing all her chores, show her that you can follow it, too and avoid Facebook until all the dinner dishes are washed and put away. If your teen is allowed one episode of his favourite Netflix show per day, follow the same rule for your shows.

By working with the same boundaries that you set for your teens, you will set a positive

example of how to consume media in a healthy way. Plus, you’ll show them that you are worthy of their respect.

## FRAME YOUR BOUNDARIES POSITIVELY

Instead of telling teens what they can’t do, tell them what they can do.

“No SnapChat until you’ve finished your homework” sounds harsh and forbidding. “You can use SnapChat as soon as your homework is done” is much more positive.

It’s the same rule, but one sounds like a privilege and the other sounds like a punishment. Within reason, avoid the word “no” – stick to the word “yes”. Doing so will help you to frame your rules in a positive way, making them easier to follow.

Nobody wants to be told “no”, but everyone likes to hear “yes”. So, when setting and explaining boundaries, state them to sound like things your teen gets to do instead of restrictions she is stuck with.

## PICK OUT SOME FAVOURITES

Every teen has devices, apps, or shows that they like better than others, and ones they’ll be more willing to give up.

When setting boundaries, include more time for the things your teen likes best, and less time for the ones they’re less crazy about. Your introverted teen might prefer Netflix

to social media, while your social butterfly looks forward to extending their SnapChat streak another day.

Take your teens’ wants and needs into account when setting boundaries. By creating boundaries that let them do the things they enjoy, you’ll give them a healthy media experience that they can still have fun with.

## TALK TO YOUR TEEN

Your teens are old enough to make some decisions along with you instead of having all their decisions made for them. They know what they like, what will motivate them, and what their schedule needs.

Talk to your teens about the boundaries you want to set. Ask how you can best support and encourage them to stick with the boundaries you already have.

Teens will be motivated to stick to boundaries that they have helped to set. And letting them in on the process will make them more comfortable coming to you when they think something needs to change.

## IT’S UP TO YOU!

Keeping up with the ways that teens use media is hard, but setting healthy boundaries doesn’t have to be. Boundaries like these will help keep teens safe and healthy in the ever-changing world of media without sacrificing the fun that comes along with it.

Article written by **Nancy Razkalla**



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# SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Technology has taken over many people's lives. If you don't have a smartphone, a tablet or a laptop people will think that you live under a rock. With all of that power in your hands, you're bound to let your child play with it. Many apps on smartphones and tablets are created specifically for toddlers, making this technology the new norm for kids to grow up around. But when exactly do you let your child access social media? A new study published by BMC Public

Health warns that introducing social media to girls as young as ten can have negative impacts on their well-being later in their adolescence.

## THE STUDY

The study was based on a polling of 9,859 adolescents between the age of 10 and 15 in the United Kingdom. The research showed that girls used social media more than boys, and by the age of 13, around half of the girls polled were using social media for more than an hour on school days—a third more than their male peers.

"While social media allows for interaction between people, it is still a sedentary activity that can be done in a solitary environment," wrote Cara L. Booker and colleagues from the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex. "Conversely, social media are often used in group settings. Whether done in isolation or with friends, there may be risks to using social media, which could lead to poorer physical and mental health in adulthood. Risk factors such as social isolation, low self-esteem, increased obesity and decreased physical activity may all contribute to later life health issues."

Adolescents were quizzed on their well being using a questionnaire that scored their "happiness" based on separate parts of their life including family and school. There was

also a "strengths and difficulties" questionnaire that polled their emotional and behavioural problems. Researchers asked what platforms on social media they were using and how much time they spent on them.

Throughout the study, researchers found that happiness dropped close to three points from 36.9 to 33.3 in girls, and two points for boys from 36.02 to 34.55. While there isn't a large number of the two, researchers were able to distinguish a connection between the well-being of girls and the use of social media.

Dr. Cara Brooker said: "Our findings suggest that it is important to monitor early interactions with social media, particularly in girls, as this could have an impact on well-being later in adolescence and perhaps throughout adulthood."

"Since we did not observe an association between social media use and well-being among boys, other factors, such as the amount of time spent gaming, might be associated with the boys' observed decline in well-being."

## HOW TO INTRODUCE SOCIAL MEDIA

There really is no reason for a ten-year-old to have a social media account, is there? That's why you should start off by letting your

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adolescent use your phone to scroll through your own social media—pending that your social media is child-friendly. Chances are that they simply want to explore and see photos of Auntie and Uncle or their favourite sports team. Under your supervision, you can easily show them these things on your phone. You'll know when your child is mature enough for their own social media account. Don't fall for the "but my friends have it!" excuse. Your ten-year-old really doesn't need their own account.

When the day comes that you do allow them to get their own account, set it up with them, sharing the password between the two of you. By knowing their password, you'll always have access to the account. On your own, manage their privacy settings. You won't want your child to know how to go back and reverse all of your settings. Be sure to check them from time to time to ensure that your settings are still intact.

Help them follow the things that you want them to follow like family and friends and sports teams. Be sure to follow these people to see what pictures and comments are being shared. If it's a fellow tween be prepared for a lot of emojis. Manage who they follow and make a deal that you have to approve who is accepted as a follow beforehand. This way you can ensure that the proper people are following them.

Lastly, limit their social media and technology use. They're still kids— they should be hanging out with their friends in person, not chatting with them on Instagram or Facebook.





# WHY BEING COOL ONLINE CAN CAUSE



## IN REAL LIFE

In today's world, people are sharing and liking or loving posts on the daily. Walk down a busy street or stop at a tourist attraction, you'll find plenty of people snapping photos on their phones and then sharing them online. It's become a standard part of everyday life. The need to share and receive likes can almost become addicting at times, but unfortunately, you can't do that in the "real world." People can have dual personalities—the cool online persona and the person who struggles with anxiety away from the digital world.

### CREATING AN ONLINE PERSONA

It's easy enough to hide behind a screen or phone using only a handle or your first name. Online, you can interact with hundreds of

people, if not thousands. It's easy enough to find communities and like-minded individuals who share the same interests as you. You can seamlessly fit in. There's no awkward introduction online, and the need for communication is minimal.

Being online gives the shyest of people the time they need to come out of their shell; they have much more time to think about the content they are going to put out, as opposed to the time they have in real life.

"The persona online may be much more fabulous, much more exciting than the everyday life that they're leading," Julie Albright, a digital sociologist at University of Southern California told [phys.org](http://phys.org), "because they see everybody else doing it."

Creating an online persona isn't always a negative thing, it can actually increase a person's self-esteem.

### NO ONE'S GOING TO TAP YOU FOR A HEART IN REAL LIFE

Away from your handle or profile, people often struggle to keep up with the online persona they've created for themselves. This can be anxiety-inducing, even for the biggest social butterflies you know. Unfortunately, there is no screen to hide behind when it comes to face to face interaction.

In a world where sharing photos and snippets of witty captions earns you a thumbs up or a heart, no one can do that for you in real life. How can you hide those terrible angles,





or make small talk that isn't 280 characters or less or use an emoji instead of a word? Having a full blown conversation with someone? That can be mentally exhausting and stress inducing.

### **WHY'S NO ONE LIKING MY POSTS?**

Have you ever taken time to create a post or tweet that has completely flopped? You normally average a ton of interaction and likes, retweets or hearts – but for some reason, you're not getting any love on your post? Has this caused you to delete the post, rework

it or become anxious about its results?

Sometimes you've told a joke or story online, and people loved it, but when you tried to tell it to people in person, it fell flat.

Social media isn't necessarily about being social; it's about performance. People want to be liked and loved, and when that isn't fulfilled by interaction, it can cause anxiety or depression.

### **GET THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS**

Put down the phone or get off the computer. Only go online

for thirty minutes or so. If you're talking to someone, tell them that you want them to take a mental break. Do some deep breathing or go focus on something that is healthier and positive.

Come to terms with the fact that you don't need to be the same person that you are online; it's only a portion of you. If you struggle to keep a conversation in person, don't stress, keep practicing by talking to people. No one is judging you; no one can see how many likes you do or don't have in person.







# SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU LONELY: HERE'S HOW TO FIX IT

by Nancy Razkalla

## Social media connects us.

However, some studies have shown that some people actually feel lonelier despite this constant connectedness.

It seems ironic, but it happens. The more time you spend on social media, depending on how you use it, the more likely it is that you will find yourself feeling lonely, left out, or feel the fear of missing out (FOMO).

## But there's good news.

If you feel happy and fulfilled in your life outside of social media, those feelings of loneliness, comparison, and FOMO will find it harder to creep in when you're online.

Here are some tips on how to find that happiness and combat those feelings for real.

## UNPLUG FROM ONLINE

Seriously.

Spend less time on social media.

It's the best way to make sure you're seeing less of the content that makes you feel left out or lonely. Looking at what your friends are doing online makes it easy to think that you're not doing anything fun with your life, or don't have people to share it with. But when you don't see as much of what other people are doing, you'll spend less time thinking about it.

You might not want to cut out social media entirely – and that's ok! But cutting back will make a world of difference.

Set a social media time limit for each day, and stick to it – ask a friend or family member to keep you accountable.

## DEVELOP YOUR INTERESTS

When you decide to spend less time on social media, you'll find you have a lot of time to spare. Find something you're interested in doing and use your newfound free time to invest in it! Maybe you love to read – head to the library and pick up a book you haven't read before. Or shoot hoops. Take photos. Draw. Run. Cook. Learn a new skill.

Anything you like to do that keeps you off of social media for a while is a great idea. If you're not online, you can't compare what you're doing (scrolling through social media) to what you're seeing (people having fun).

And if you can't compare, you'll feel happier and less lonely.

Finding a hobby and developing an interest is great for two reasons. You



won't just take your mind off of what's going on online – you'll also be having fun!

## BE AROUND PEOPLE

A fantastic way to combat loneliness is to simply spend time with others! Set aside some time each week to spend with friends or family members doing something you enjoy.

Maybe it's playing cards with your siblings, or hiking with your friends, or grabbing a bite with someone you haven't seen in a while. Maybe it's watching a Netflix show with a friend or family member that you can talk and laugh about later – together.

No matter what, it's important to spend time with other people. It's harder to feel lonely when you have secure friendships.

Everyone is different – some people need constant companionship, while others prefer to spend time alone. But everyone needs people to spend time with from time to time.

Find the people you love to be with and invest in relationships with them. It's often more fulfilling to have a small number of close friends than a large number of acquaintances.

## STRUCTURE YOUR TIME

You can plan out your days so that you have enough to do, aren't bored, and don't have as much time to scroll through social media.

Make plans to do the things you need to do (like going to soccer practice or school, doing homework, working) and include time to do things you enjoy. Don't give yourself too much time alone with nothing to do – that's usually the best time to whip out your phone and see if there's anything new on Instagram.

Plan to spend time with other people, or work on projects, or do whatever it is you like to do, and make sure you stick to your plans.

If you can keep yourself busy with other things, you won't be as tempted to check your phone.

## KNOW THE TRUTH

The truth is that people always post the best things on social media.

And they leave off the things they think are boring, everyday, or bad.

So if you see something online that looks better than whatever you're doing – it's probably because the person who posted

it wants their followers to see the best parts of their life.

But you don't post about everyday activities like scrolling through social media, feeding your dog, or playing video games. And neither does anyone else.

What you see on social media is a highlight reel of your friends' greatest moments. Don't compare the things they post on their best days to what you do on your not-so-great days. You'll always come up short because it's not a fair comparison.

So know that you're not alone. Everyone else has just-OK and even not-so-great days. You just don't see as much about them online.

## HOPE FOR WHEN IT'S HARD

Don't give up.

Remember that social media is a great tool for keeping in touch and sharing your stories – but you don't need to check it every day. There are tons of other great things to do that will make you feel happy and take away the loneliness you may feel. And you can take comfort in knowing that everyone else has good days and bad days, just like you do.

You're not alone.







# 5 WAYS TO FILTER NEGATIVITY ONLINE

Every time you open social media the negativity is there. Hateful posts fill your newsfeed and trolls live in the comments section. It's exhausting, and frankly not worth the effort. This year, take the time to detox your media accounts and have a happier, healthier experience online!

Here are five small steps you can take to filter the negativity from your feed:

## 1: Hit Unfollow

One way to start the school year off with a positive mindset is to take this simple step to remove the negativity from your life. Hit unfollow. Any organisation, person, group, or page that annoys you, frustrates you or makes you upset. Unfollow them. Let them go, and don't feel guilty. It doesn't make you a bad person, or even a rude one. It just means you are moving towards a happier and healthier you. And that's a good thing.

## 2: Unfriend the whiners

We all have that one friend online who uses social media platforms to broadcast their disappointment with

life. Their updates continually consist of "poor me" and "I'm outraged! Hear me rant". They always seem to have something negative to say, and someone to blame for their problems. You don't need those people clogging up your newsfeed. If someone doesn't inspire, uplift and encourage you, you don't need to be their friend. Don't be afraid to cut ties with people who pull you down – online and in real life.

## 3: Flag the garbage

Some people use the internet as their dumping ground, and the posts they write are pure garbage. When you stumble across these posts, instead of quickly scrolling past so you don't have to look at it anymore, flag them! Most often, social media sites have a button for you to flag or report inappropriate content — use it. Don't feel like a tattler, instead feel like a garbage man. You're helping clean up the internet and make it a nicer place for everyone.

## 4: Speak up

One way to counter online negativity is to be able to speak up about it. Not in a way that adds fuel to the fire, but

in a way that calmly articulates what it is that bothers you. If someone you know posts something online that bothers you, say something. You can message them privately to avoid stirring up more trouble, but don't be afraid to stand up. Be open about what bothers you and be an advocate for change. Your influence can shift what shows up on your timeline for the better.

## 5: Positivity starts with you

When you choose to focus on the good, you create positivity. Choose to seek out uplifting posts that encourage you and make you happy. You get to choose what you post about, so post about things that make you happy. Post about things that encourage and inspire others. Be a bright light on social media. Strive to be a beacon of positivity for yourself, and for those people whose feeds you show up on.

With these steps, you can start the school year off with a clear head and a positive mindset, and these will make all the difference.

# TEENS ARE COSMETICALLY TRYING TO LOOK LIKE **SNAPCHAT** FILTERS



Yes, you read that correctly. Teens are really trying to look like Snapchat filters in real life by utilizing cosmetic surgery. No don't worry, they're not trying to look like a dog face. In the past, patients would bring in a photo of a celebrity they wanted to look like; now they're bringing in a photo of themselves with a filter applied to it. Dr. Neelam Vashi, the director of the Ethnic Skin Center at Boston Medical Center, has come up with the term, "Snapchat dysmorphia" to explain the new phenomenon.

## WHAT IS SNAPCHAT DYSMORPHIA?

A study that was published in JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery Viewpoint discovered apps such as Snapchat and photo-editing Facetune are the root of this new trend. They allow selfies taken by the average person

to attain a physical "perfection" that was only once achievable if you were featured in a celebrity or beauty magazine.

According to the study, body dysmorphic disorder is more than an insecurity or a lack of confidence. It's an excessive preoccupation with a perceived flaw in appearance, classified on the obsessive-compulsive spectrum. Those with BDD often go to great lengths to hide their imperfections, engage in repetitive behaviours like skin picking or grooming and may visit dermatologists or plastic surgeons frequently, hoping to change their appearance.

The American Medical Academy of Facial and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery says 55 percent of clinicians

saw patients who "wanted to look better in their selfies" in 2017. That's a 13 percent increase from the year before.

"People bring in photos of themselves at certain angles or with certain kinds of lighting," Dr. Neelam Vashi told Inverse. "I just see a lot of images that are just really unrealistic, and it sets up unrealistic expectations for patients because they're trying to look like a fantasized version of themselves."

"Sometimes a trigger can happen really early on — maybe it's like someone says something to another person," said Vashi. "I think social media could be kind of like that; it becomes a trigger for people to become very preoccupied with how they look."



## WHAT PROCEDURES ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

Vashi has seen a change in the procedures commonly asked for; rhinoplasty was once the trend—it's a nose job where the hump on the bridge of some noses is shaved down. She has noticed that more people are asking to look like Snapchat filters, the butterfly filter or the flower crown filter specifically.

In these filters, lip size or eye size are increased, symmetry, and the way the proportions of the face are organized. "People have asked me to reshape their nose, or maybe give them fuller lips. But it's usually asymmetry that they want to be corrected," she says.

Mark Shriver, Ph.D., an anthropologist at Pennsylvania State University who has been studying facial symmetry for years using 3D photographs, has found that people tend to see symmetrical faces as more attractive. "In the extreme, asymmetrical faces are

indicative of some sort of trauma," he told Inverse. "The evolutionary psychology argument is that there might be some sort of selective pressure toward symmetry."

There's nothing wrong with an asymmetric face, but because symmetric faces are seen as most attractive, people will seek out expensive procedures. It's important to note that Snapchat doesn't make asymmetric faces more symmetric. The filters decrease the appearance of fine lines, wrinkles, and blemishes by smoothing and brightening the underlying tissue, lowering the appearance of asymmetry in some faces.

## WE'RE ALWAYS JUDGING OURSELVES

It's not uncommon for a person to judge themselves when they look in the mirror. Unfortunately, with the addition of these filters, it has allowed for us to be more critical of ourselves.

"Snapchat and Instagram certainly have the potential to affect the way

people view their own bodies," Kaylee Kruzan, a Ph.D. candidate who works in at Cornell's Social Media Lab told Inverse. "Social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook constrain users to see their bodies from a third person or observer's perspective. This can lead to body objectification, which we know is linked to poor mental health and well-being."

"There has been some work suggesting that with social media-induced plastic surgery, people come to value, and relate to, the idealized images they create on social media over their actual felt body, and strive to attain 'ideal' standards through body modification," Kruzan added.

With Snapchat and other apps continuously pumping out new filters, Vashi doesn't see Snapchat dysmorphia going away anytime soon.

*"It's definitely on the rise," Vashi says. "Plastic surgeons will be dealing with this for years to come."*





# THE FRIGHTENING CONNECTION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

BY TREVOR MCDONALD

According to scientists, the obsession with social media, selfies, and always staying connected is linked to narcissism, addiction, and mental illness. The relationship between digital use and mental health is a very close one, as more and more psychologists are seeing patients as young as 12 years old struggle with body dysmorphia and more because of their obsession with social media. What may seem like a simple selfie could be the beginning of an unhealthy mental condition.

Let's look more at the effects of social media on our youth's mental health:

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAN LEAD TO NARCISSISM

Narcissism can occur in both young adults and older adults. The case affects people of all ages and is only becoming worse with social media. With so many filters, effects, poses, and makeup looks, we can feel like a million bucks, just by posting one photo.

While self-confidence is healthy and good for our well-being, narcissism takes it over the edge. Studies have shown that people who post multiple

selfies are more likely to suffer from narcissism, or the excessive interest in oneself. According to Pamela Rutledge in Psychology Today, "selfies frequently trigger perceptions of self-indulgence or attention-seeking social dependence that raises the damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't spectre of either narcissism or very low self-esteem."

## SOCIAL MEDIA SETS UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND JEALOUSY

Social media has a major effect on how we communicate and build



relationships today. These platforms serve as our “highlight reel,” so we often find ourselves comparing our lives to those of our friends that we see on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter.

For example, you may see someone on an exotic vacation and get jealous, but not know the hard work or expenses it took to get there (because this part isn’t on our feed!). These feelings of jealousy are amplified when we can see what everyone is doing, when they are doing it.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAN LEAD TO DEPRESSION

According to a study done by UC San Diego, the more people use Facebook, the more likely they are to experience mental health issues, such as negative life satisfaction. This correlates to the above point, that we think our lives aren’t good enough when we compare them to other people’s. In addition, even teens themselves believe that social media is making bullying, body image anxiety, and depression and loneliness worse.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAN STUNT OUR SOCIAL GROWTH

As great as social media is for building and maintaining relationships with people that we don’t see very often, it’s also hindering the relationships we already have.

As mentioned above, social media feeds our jealousy because we are hyper-critical of every movement. Think your significant other is cheating? Check their direct messages on Instagram. Not sure if he likes you? Swipe on a new boy on one of the many dating apps.



Feeling blue? Post a selfie to make someone jealous. These are just some of the reasons why our relationships are being put on hold because of social media. All of this leads to higher levels of attachment anxiety and trust issues.

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS ADDICTIVE

Did you know that going on social media is literally addictive? Studies have shown that scrolling through your newsfeed releases some of the same brain chemicals as drugs do. This can be detrimental to anyone, but especially to teens and young adults because the teen brain is more vulnerable to addiction. In addition, these addictive traits can make existing mental health conditions, like depression or anxiety, worse. This forms a type of dual-diagnosis, or substance abuse paired with mental disorders.

## HOW TO HELP

Do you feel like social media is taking hold of your life in an unhealthy way? There are many ways to take control of your life and stop the scrolling pandemonium. Here are some ideas:

- Do a technology detox, where you don’t use your phone (or any technology) for at least a day
- Limit notifications or put a block on social media for a few hours right before you go to bed
- Put your phone on “do not disturb” mode so you don’t have constant notifications interrupting your day.

These are just a few ways you can take control of your technology and social media usage and focus on yourself. Remember to cherish your loved ones and spend quality time with them in real life, rather than from behind a screen.



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