

## Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its Effect on Adolescent Mental Health

Joni Orazio, MD, DFAPA

FOMO is nearly ubiquitous in society, but especially in adolescence. As the depth of social media opportunities expand and research increasingly suggests the potential for adverse effects, questions arise about its impact on adolescent mental health. These fears should be tempered with an appreciation of which teens are most at risk.

For some teens, social media is helpful for feeling connected and supported, whereas many teens describe a more ambivalent relationship. Unfortunately, there exists a sizable portion of teens who find social media anxiety provoking. It is this group of teens that FOMO can generate severe anxiety, feeling they are missing out on other teens seemingly perfect life, as portrayed on social media. This can lead to envy, sadness, self-loathing, and loneliness.

Some of the risk factors for teens to develop mental health concerns due to FOMO include:

- Current or past depression and/or social anxiety
- History of bullying or trauma
- Excessive use of social media

- Exclusion
- Perfectionism
- Lack of connectedness to peers
- Screen time use at bedtime
- Poor self confidence

How can we reduce the impact of FOMO?

- Explore **how** your teen spends time with social media. Discuss the amount of time they spend on social media, how it makes them feel, what they like about it, and don't like about it.
- Assure your teen has offline relationships and encourage opportunities for them to develop connected relationships.
- Carve out screen free time and encourage social situations that will create connection without screen.
- Discourage screen time at bedtime.
- Discuss the issue that social media feeds the desire for attention and that much of social media is an illusion, not reality.
- Minimize your own social media screen time and demonstrate an

active social connectedness with them without the screen.

Spending quality time discussing the complex and potentially destructive aspects of social media, as well as the positive can be the most powerful tool to help your teen avoid the dangers of the ever complex world of social media.