



ENGLISH PRACTICE Material 1-30-2020

Section One Reading

Article A: Mental Health and the Effects of Social Media

1. Is Facebook making you depressed? If so, you're not alone. According to a recent study by UK disability charity Scope, of 1500 Facebook and Twitter users surveyed, 62 percent reported feeling inadequate and 60 percent reported feelings of jealousy from comparing themselves to other users.

2. I've heard similar complaints from friends and I've felt it myself on a bad day. Most frequently, I hear such statements from those who are struggling with depression. It makes sense that if you are already in a low mood or not feeling good about yourself, having pictures of happy couples and smiling babies pop up on your screen on a consistent basis may make you feel worse. The same is true if you tend to generally have a negative outlook on life.

3. If Facebook posts depress you, the solution is simple. Here are four things you can do today to help you cope:

- Deactivate your Facebook account (you can always reactivate it later)
- Unfollow your most (seemingly) happy and successful, friends
- Remember that Facebook isn't a representation of reality
- Turn off the computer and go make your own annoyingly happy moments

Should you really take the four actions above?

4. In a 2015 study on the effects of Facebook use on mental health, researchers at the University of Missouri discovered that regular use could lead to symptoms of depression if the site triggered feelings of envy in the user. "If it is used as a way to size up one's own accomplishments against others, it can have a negative effect," said Professor Margaret Duffy, one of the professors who co-authored the research. She explains that if it's used "to see how well an acquaintance is doing financially or how happy an old friend is in his relationship - things that cause envy among users - use of the site can lead to feelings of depression."

5. However, those who use the site primarily to feel connected do not experience the negative effects. In fact, when not triggering feelings of envy, the study shows, Facebook could be a good resource and have positive effects on well-being. Further studies have shown that the majority of social media users tend to edit and post only their most attractive pictures, or 'put a rose-tinted gloss over their lives' in an effort to idealise themselves and, researchers believe, to improve others' impressions of them.

6. To avoid Facebook-induced depression, users should be aware of the risks of using the site as a tool for comparison. Furthermore, users should be aware that most people are presenting a biased, positive version of reality on social media. Finally, if you're still feeling down, angry, or generally disillusioned because of the positive news shared by your Facebook friends, on or offline, you should question why you feel that way.

7. Barring clinical depression or a recent life setback, is it really such a bad thing to see another human being enjoying life, especially if it's a friend- or at least someone you tolerate enough to accept as a Facebook friend? With all of the suffering and pain in the world, wouldn't it be a tragedy if people stopped sharing joyful events for fear of making someone else jealous? Imagine if people only discussed all of the negative things that surrounded them. Especially over this past year, don't we have enough tragic posts appearing in our newsfeeds 24/7?

8. Given that there will always be someone who's taller, richer, better-looking, who has more friends, a better job, etc., we can either allow ourselves to fall into the dangerous trap of comparison, or we can choose to remember that regardless of what others around you appear to have, everyone is grappling with their own struggles. For every promotion, a book deal and Tony nomination, chances are, the recipient has experienced equally or more significant life setbacks.

9. Also important to remember is that for every person that seems to have more, there is another with less. For each individual whose qualities you covet, there's someone out there who wishes they had what you have. If we can't change our outer circumstances, at least



we can try to change our perspective and learn to be grateful for what we have. We can also learn to celebrate others' successes. Sharing in other people's joy can often lift our spirits.

10. "Be aware of what others are doing, applaud their efforts, acknowledge their successes, and encourage them in their pursuits. When we all help one another, everybody wins" - Jim Stovall

11. These suggestions may be difficult, especially if you're struggling with low self-worth or depression. If that is the case, seek help from a friend or a professional. Whether it's reaching out for support, practising gratitude or simply surrounding yourself with more of the positive, you owe it to yourself to make the best out of this life.

12. Stop torturing yourself by comparing your life with everyone else's positively biased representations of theirs. Seek to improve your own life in a realistic manner. Choose to look at the positives and to celebrate your wins... as well as theirs.

Questions 1-6

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in the text?

- YES - if the statement agrees with the views or claims
- NO - if the statement contradicts the views or claims
- NOT GIVEN - it is impossible to say what the writer's views/claims are

1. Social media makes many people unhappy
2. When people see photographs of others having fun it make them feel really happy
3. There are steps you can take to lessen the effects of social media on your wellbeing
4. Research shows how certain aspects can make you feel good about yourself
5. Ask for help on Facebook and Twitter
6. Seek positivity in your own life and stop comparing yourself to others

Task 2: Complete the summary below.

Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the text for each answer.

Mental Health And Social Media

There is a desire among most people to check their social media accounts obsessively with many people feeling **33**. when they compare their lives to others. This is often felt by those suffering from depression or who have simply had a bad day. When looking through your newsfeed and seeing photographs of people having a great time, it could make you feel **34**. There are steps that can be taken to reduce these feelings, including removing yourself from Facebook or other social media accounts. Another step is to leave the computer alone and go and do something you enjoy. Research has shown that looking at Facebook obsessively can point your mental health in the direction of **35** When comparing your life to those that you see on social media feeds it can have a **36**..... effect. When people start to envy others on social media, it can lead to a person thinking badly about their own lives and themselves. Those people who use Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family experience more than **37**..... effects. Research also shows that most people who post photographs, heavily edit in an attempt to make others see them how they want to be seen. It is important to think about how everyone has their own problems in the world, glamorous people on Facebook included. For each person you see who inspires you to crave what they have, there are others who want what **38** We should be happy for others good fortune and learn to be grateful for our own successes. If you feel like you are having difficulties with depression or low **39** ask for help. Even if you talk through it all with a good friend or colleague or envelop yourself in a more positive environment, small changes can make sure that you get **40** out of your life.

Article B: The Facebook party that became a riot

1. It began as a plan for a very normal 16th birthday party. Merthe Weusthuis wanted a quiet celebration with a small group of friends in her family home in the small Dutch town of Haren. Like many teenagers, she decided to send out invitations via a social network



site. But Merthe made one big mistake: she used open-access settings on Facebook, so it wasn't just her friends who could see details of the event, lots of strangers could too.

2. The number of invitation acceptances quickly snowballed into an avalanche. Not marking the event as 'private' meant the electronic invitation was eventually seen by 240,000 people, of whom 30,000 confirmed online that they planned to attend. To make matters worse, an unauthorized campaign was launched to promote the party by means of a dedicated website and Twitter account, which received hundreds of thousands of hits.
3. The party became known as 'Project X Haren' after the 2012 American film Project X in which three high school students throw a birthday party that spins out of control. Video trailers for Merthe's party were produced, with scenes from Project X edited in, and they were posted on YouTube. T-shirts featuring Merthe's face were also made, all without her knowledge or consent.
4. Even after Merthe's parents had cancelled the party, the publicity didn't stop. Local media reported on the forthcoming event and teenagers turned up to have their pictures taken outside the Weusthuis family home. In the evening the party was to have taken place, about 5,000 teenagers began gathering in Haren, many outside the Weusthuis house. When it became clear that there was nothing to gatecrash, violence broke out and 500 riot police equipped with helmets, shields and batons were brought in to control the crowd. Shops in the center of Haren were vandalized and looted, journalists were attacked, cars were set on fire or overturned and street signs and lamp posts were damaged.
5. However, Facebook was also involved in the clean-up effort in the days after the riot. A group called 'Project Clean-X Haren' was set up to gather and organize volunteers. Another group named 'Suspect-X Haren' was created to help police identify and arrest the rioters by sharing photos and videos of the event.
6. A number of other 'Facebook parties' have spiraled out of control, including the 16th birthday party of British teenager Bradley McAnulty in April 2012. Bradley had not posted details of the event on the internet, and had been careful to ask his friends not to, but somehow the news leaked out and appeared on Blackberry Messenger as well as Facebook. More than 400 gatecrashers invaded his family home in Poole, Dorset, causing extensive damage.

Task 1 Choose the best option to complete these sentences.

1. Merthe Weusthuis made the mistake of ____.

- a. using Facebook to organise her birthday celebration
- b. letting her friends invite their friends to her party
- c. inviting people she did not really like to her party
- d. not checking who could see her online invitation

2. The number of confirmed guests ____.

- a. did not reflect the reality
- b. got out of control almost immediately
- c. was manageable until the Twitter campaign
- d. suddenly shot up when people started watching the YouTube video trailers

3. 'Project X Haren' was named after ____.

- a. another party in the same area
- b. the group who promoted the party online
- c. a party video on YouTube
- d. a film Reading skills practice

4. Local journalists ____.

- a. gave the event publicity
- b. tried to discourage people from attending
- c. gathered outside the house
- d. started the violence

5. Violence broke out when ____.

- a. teenagers arrived in large numbers
- b. people realised there was no party
- c. rival gangs turned up
- d. gatecrashers saw the riot police

6. After the riot, Facebook was used to ____.

- a. plan another party in Haren
- b. send messages of support to Merthe and her family
- c. help rioters get in contact with each other
- d. help the town recover from the violence



7. Bradley McNulty ____.

- made the same mistake as Merthe Weusthuis
- sent invites via Blackberry Messenger
- had taken steps to prevent problems
- posted details of the event online

8. In Bradley McNulty's case, ____.

- only a small number of people arrived
- the gatecrashers were well behaved
- the gatecrashers caused a lot of damage to his home
- the gatecrashers caused a lot of damage to his town

Task 2:

Discussion: Is Facebook a good way to organise a party? Why or why not? Are you careful with your privacy settings on social network sites?

Article B: Is social media really as social as it seems?

How many times have you checked your phone today? Your Facebook? Your Twitter?

- Social media has become a huge part of everyday life, and many people criticise the effect it has, especially on young people. Teenagers and young adults use technology in almost all of our daily activities: from tweeting a friend, to uploading pictures on Instagram, to checking our Facebook notifications. Some people see this constant usage as evidence of addiction to social media, but others defend it as a normal part of modern life and communication.
- The biggest criticism is that using social media online makes us LESS social in real life. We can become obsessed with checking if we have new notifications or messages – up to hundreds of times a day. This can lead us to ignore people around us, and there's nothing more annoying than trying to talk to a friend who is texting someone else! Often, people confuse social media with reality. Having lots of Facebook friends doesn't mean having a connection with those people in real life, and we forget that somebody's 'image' online doesn't always reflect real life. Lots of people only post good things, so we believe their lives are perfect, and we spend a lot of time trying to achieve unrealistic standards.
- But I believe that although these concerns are sometimes valid, social media has opened up many new possibilities, especially to young people. It allows me to stay in touch with friends around the world, see their pictures and hear about their adventures, and I can find my old classmates too. I can follow my favourite bands and actors along with news websites. Social media is also a great way to promote causes like the ALS ice bucket challenge, which raised an enormous amount of money for charity. Facebook has even been used to organise protests from Syria to Hong Kong. Social media has a lot more uses than just posting 'selfies'!
- In my opinion, social media being a big part of your life is not necessarily a bad thing. Although using technology to the point of reliance is unhealthy, and being addicted to your smartphone means you can miss out on real life, using it in the right way, to connect with friends and stay informed about world events, is a huge advantage of modern times.

Communication - a thing of the past?

- 'You know,' said one of my students to me. 'Mega sad face.' The fact that I could barely understand a student of mine, who's usually quite articulate, got me thinking about communication and the years to come.
- We all think we communicate all the time, and that's true. There's also non-verbal communication you could add into the mix - everything we're saying when we're not saying anything. But there's a fine line between saying things to people, or liking and sharing a post on social media, and communication. I'm quite well connected - there's Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, email, everything! but sometimes communication starts to feel like a chore. Check this blog post, read that article someone shared, text back to someone else and answer their question ... Sometimes I feel like a cross between Siri and a mad juggler. Nothing seems to go in and I'm always mixing people up - asking someone how their band is going when they can't play an instrument or how the job search is going when someone's just written to say how depressed they are that they can't find a job.
- So it was quite a shock to spend New Year in the Highlands in Scotland with no phone signal, no internet and no 'communication' at all, apart from with the people I was with. Suddenly all the pressure to communicate disappeared. All of our conversations became



slower, more inverted and far more interesting. We were a group of 12, a mixture of couples and friends, only one of whom I was at university with, so I was meeting a bunch of new people for the first time. Our conversations veered towards the banal and the humdrum in that we often discussed our plans for the day and what we were going to cook in the evening, but often they went a lot farther and a lot deeper.

8. Tucked up on the leather sofas, digesting dinner, we dissected Brexit and one person even changed their perspective entirely! We shared ideas and theories, plots of books and plays and city trips we'd been on, described family troubles and gave advice, listened to work scenarios and offered pointers, and we had to talk and sketch and use words more than ever before, because you couldn't say, 'It's a great film, you should google it later.' Some of us even had sore throats from talking so much! In such a short space of time, due to the proximity of sharing interconnected cottages and verbal communication, I felt much closer to the new people I'd met and been speaking with than some other people I communicate with in my normal life.
9. I don't think our common, current methods of communication come close to being in a small house with lots of people and having to communicate live. The brevity of Twitter, the showiness of Facebook, all these aspects contribute to a shallow form of communication that doesn't challenge you to examine your feelings and motives enough. 'Liking' something is an instant response but what does it really say about your opinion of something? It's an identical response to millions of other people, whereas you and your thoughts are unique. If we're not careful, perhaps we might forget how to communicate on a deeper level.
10. And what did my student mean? Were they distraught? Panicked? Melancholic? I'll never know.

Task 1

Discussion: How might growing up with social media affect the next generation's ability to communicate?

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