



## TAKING A BREAK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

This strategy is suggested in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

### **Social media and the dangers of perfection**

#### About taking a break from social media

Whilst some positive effects regarding the use of social media by young people are acknowledged, there is a preponderance of research highlighting the negative effects on adolescents' mental health and wellbeing, often correlating strongly with the increased use of time spent online. Whilst there is limited research regarding the impact of taking a complete break from social media, studies do suggest that reducing or temporarily stopping the use of social media can be helpful for improving mental health, especially for young people.

#### The scientific evidence behind taking a break from social media

This study found that college students who reduced social media use to just 30 minutes per day experienced significant decreases in loneliness and depression. The study's findings strongly suggested that limiting social media use to approximately 30 minutes per day may lead to significant improvements in wellbeing.

- Hunt, M. G., et al. (2018). *No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression*. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. 37 (10): 751–768.

#### Emerging research

In a not-yet-published piece of research, the University of York looked at the effects of young people aged 12-13 years (year 8) giving up their smartphone completely for 21 days. This experiment was conducted at the Stanway School in Colchester and was featured in the Channel 4 programme, 'Swiped: The School that Banned Smartphones'.

Researchers found the ban resulted in notable improvements in sleep and improved mood. On average, students were going to bed 50 minutes earlier than before the ban, were falling asleep 20 minutes faster, and reported getting a full hour of extra rest each night. Students also reported a 17% reduction in feelings related to depression and an 18% reduction in feelings related to anxiety, feeling generally less upset and nervous.



### Further reading

You can read more about the University of York experiment here:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2024/research/school-smartphone-ban-better-sleep/>

And you can watch the programme itself here:

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/swiped-the-school-that-banned-smartphones>

This article from Harvard summarises why you need to take a break from social media and how you should do it:

<https://summer.harvard.edu/blog/need-a-break-from-social-media-heres-why-you-should-and-how-to-do-it/>