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"Social Media and Adolescents: a double-edged sword"

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ABSTRACT

Social media use has become increasingly prevalent in young people's lives. It impacts adolescents' lives both positively and negatively. Therapists must be aware of its impacts, both positive and negative, and be familiar with social media in order to fully understand the adolescent's world. Therapists should both support and guide the adolescent in their social media use.

This theoretical dissertation assesses what the key positive and negative impacts of social media are on the adolescent, and the impact they have on the therapeutic relationship, analysing key literature around the topic from the last ten years. It evaluates the therapist's role in helping the adolescent to navigate their use of social media and building an awareness around the effects that social media has on their life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social media use has grown exponentially over the last number of years, with social media use in adolescents doubling in the last six years alone (Rideout and Robb, 2018). Social media has transformed the social landscape in which adolescents live (Bell, Reid, Dyson, Schlosser, and Alexander, 2019), and has become the most normal place for them to socialise together (Rafla, Carson, and Dejong, 2014).

Adolescence is the principal period of social and identity formation (Erikson, 1950). There is much development during this stage, in social interactions, self-image, identity, intimacy and sexuality, conflict, and emotions (McLean, Jarman, and Rodgers, 2019; Barth, 2015; Valkenburg and Peter, 2011). As part of their development, teenagers push boundaries, take risks, make mistakes and hopefully learn from them (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 89). Much of this development is now experienced online through social media (Barth, 2015).

The world of social media is a relatively new phenomenon. There have been many studies focusing on some positive and many negative aspects of the centrality of social media in adolescent lives (Valkenburg and Peter, 2011). These studies have reported mixed and often conflicting findings (Seabrook, Kern, and Rickard, 2016), meaning a lot remains ambiguous and unknown about the effects of social media on adolescents (Rafla et al., 2014). It has been described as a "double-edged sword", having both favourable and unfavourable outcomes (Keles, McCrae, and Grealish, 2019, p.2).

Given how new the world of social media is, there is often a generational divide between adolescents and their parents (Betton and Woollard, 2018). Adolescents can feel frustrated with adults' lack of

understanding around their social media use, and it can alienate them from speaking to the adults about difficult emotions or problems around their social media use (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 49). Adolescents want adults to understand how and why they use social media, and for them to avoid jumping to conclusions around it (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 130).

The therapeutic alliance relies on the therapist understanding and respecting the adolescent's social media use, while having knowledge of the different platforms and their potential issues (Pagnotta, Ponterotto, Blumberg, and Alvord, 2018). It is vital that the therapist understands the adolescent's world fully when working with them, namely, understanding social media, their use of it, and how it impacts on their values, lifestyle choices, and emotions (Pagnotta et al., 2018). It is also important that therapists are aware of both the positive and negative effects of social media (Betton and Woollard, 2018). Fundamentally, the therapist must be competent in social media in order to help the adolescent develop interventions if needed (Pagnotta *et al*., 2018, p. 338), and must counsel without judgement or criticism (Barth, 2015, p. 204).

The aim of this paper is to explore what the therapist needs to know about social media and its impacts when working with adolescents in order to derive workable guidelines. This paper will firstly look at key positive impacts of social media on adolescents, followed by key negative impacts. It will then analyse both positive and negative impacts and evaluate the therapist's role in helping the adolescent to navigate their use of social media.

It is important to note that social media changes rapidly, with adolescents being the quickest to adopt these changes (Rafla *et al*., 2014). Literature quickly becomes outdated as the world of social media moves so quickly, therefore, research papers no older than 2011 have been used in this theoretical dissertation.

CHAPTER 2 - POSITIVE IMPACTS & EFFECTS ON THERAPY

Adolescents tend to view social media as a positive influence in their lives (Frith, 2017 as cited in Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 33). Social media is an attractive world for many adolescents. One in three adolescents prefer online communication over face-to-face interaction (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 97). Social media offers adolescents a degree of anonymity, which gives them more security and confidence than they might have offline (Betton and Woollard, 2018).

A 2017 Ofcom survey of 12-15-year olds found that the majority were using social media to learn about things they found interesting, look at things that made them laugh or relaxed, and find things to share with their friends (Ofcom, 2017, p. 89). Each of these can be seen as positive uses of social media, and areas in which the therapist may be able to work with the adolescent if guidance on positive social media use is required.

Among its positive impacts on adolescents which will be looked at in this chapter are: maintaining and forming friendships, feeling connected, building self-esteem, forming self-identity, looking after mental health, and support for self-harm and suicidal ideation (Best, Manktelow and Taylor, 2014; O'Reilly, 2020; Betton and Woollard, 2018).

1. **Friendship and connection**

A key function for social media use in adolescents is that it allows them to keep in touch with friends and form new friendships online (O'Keefe *et al*., 2011). Forming and maintaining close personal relationships

is an important part of developing as an adolescent (Wood, Bukowski, and Lis, 2015). Adolescents now live out many of their normal developments, such as conflict, anxieties or distress that occur in friendships, through social media (Barth, 2015).

Teenagers who are lonely or socially anxious use social media to communicate about intimate topics instead of face to face, and it gives them a way of feeling connected (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 103). It allows the adolescent to build friendships with a wider network, and with people from different backgrounds to them, thus growing their connections and social skills (Bell *et al.,* 2019, p. 93).

The adolescent seeks the approval of their peers and friends as they move to distance themselves from their family (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 107). Friendships are at the core of an adolescent's existence, and it is often these friendships and online communication that have the greatest impact on the adolescent. The therapist must acknowledge the importance of the adolescent's community, and work with the adolescent in understanding their social functioning.

2. **Self-esteem**

Social media can help an adolescent build their self-esteem as it allows an element of control in their self-presentation online. Social media offers a space for positive validation from the adolescent's peers. It can also create a sense of security as adolescents are often self-conscious (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 97). Social media allows the adolescent to explore and access information they may be embarrassed to talk face-to-face to someone about, giving them a place to discuss it more openly and anonymously online (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 74).

The therapist should be aware that their client may not talk openly about things they feel embarrassed about and they may seek support on social media instead until the therapeutic alliance is formed. The therapist must also recognise how social media helps boost the adolescent's self-esteem and confidence and may be used as a resource when working with them.

3. Mental Health

A global participatory research study with teenagers found that while they do not use social media specifically to support their mental health, they find the activities on it, such as speaking to friends and family and wider communities, have positive impacts on their mental health and wellbeing (Third *et al*., 2014).

Social media can also act as a distraction for adolescents from their distressing emotions (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 67). Within social media there are a lot of apps, sites, and pages that help teens take control of their health and well-being.

Therapists can blend these into their therapeutic work to help teenagers to engage with them (East and Harvard, 2015, p. 3). Therapists should work with the social media the adolescent already uses and engages with as they are more likely to use them as a source of support (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 72). The therapist can explore the apps and websites within therapy, showing the teen the tools available to them on social media which offer support. The therapist can play a key role in helping the young person use and engage in this element of social media, helping the adolescent to broaden their support systems and communications networks (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 53).

4. Self-identity

Social media provides an important context for adolescents to play out and experience developing aspects of their identity (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 102). Identity development in adolescents can be either supported or hindered by their online activities (Rafla *et al*., 2014, p.5). Adolescence is a time where self-presentation and self-disclosure are both learned and practised. In experimenting with both, adolescents consider the feedback they receive from others, and continue to try out and validate their social identities until they integrate them into their sense of self (Valkenburg and Peter, 2011, p. 122). Social media and online communication give adolescents a greater freedom and sense of security to try things out in comparison to face-to-face, away from any perceived authority (Davies and Eynon, 2013, p. 63).

Adolescents explore and shape their identity online in choosing what parts of themselves to share and with whom in their online community (Betton and Woollard, 2018). If the feedback they receive online is validating it helps build the adolescent's self-esteem and a positive sense of self (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 74). In exploring the self in respect to others, the adolescent can gain confidence and make connections with others if it is managed successfully (Davies and Eynon, 2013, p. 69).

As adolescents manipulate social media to develop and explore their identities, they need experience and skills to navigate what unfolds, and the therapist plays a key role here (Bell *et al*., 2019, p. 93). The therapist must act as a support for the adolescent as they work through their self-identity. Through therapy it is important that the adolescent becomes less reliant on external stimuli for approval and learn to listen to themselves (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 100).

5. Support for self-harm and suicidal ideation

Self-harm and suicidal thoughts are very common throughout adolescence. Due to the stigma around both and a fear that they will not be understood, adolescents are generally unwilling to seek help for self-harm or suicidal thoughts in-person, and instead share more with their online peers (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 76; Seko *et al.*, 2015). Adolescents want informal support without a negative viewpoint or judgement (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 141).

The therapist needs to be aware of this, and that the adolescent may not be open to talking about self-harm or suicidal thoughts with them as they may be getting the support they think they need online. The therapist should be familiar with the types of online support and forums and be able to guide the adolescent to them if it is appropriate (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 142). The therapist needs to be aware that if social media is used properly it can be a key resource for helping potentially suicidal individuals (Durkee, Hadlackzky, Westerlund, and Carli, 2011 p. 3939).

6. Conclusion

In what is a challenging time for adolescents, social media can bring a number of positive elements into their lives. Offering greater friendships and connection, giving the adolescent more freedom to explore their own identities and sense of self, and access to information on parts of their lives they are struggling with means that social media is a necessary support for adolescents. It is critical that the therapist is aware of the positive sides of social media which can help support the adolescent and incorporate this into the therapy.

The negative impacts of social media are more widely spoken about and will be looked at in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 - NEGATIVE IMPACTS & EFFECTS ON THERAPY

Despite the positive impacts, there are dangers to adolescents in their usage of social media which therapists must be aware of. Further, adolescents have a high threshold for seeking help about upsetting online experiences, as they tend not to share what happens online with parents or figures of authority (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 133). This suggests that they keep a lot of negative online experiences to themselves. It is important that the therapist is aware of what they might be experiencing.

As teenagers are still developing cognitively, they have limited ability for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure and are at greater risk to the adverse effects of social media use. This can then put their mental health at greater risk, and this may affect their therapy (O'Keeffe *et al*., 2011; Keles *et al*., 2019).

This paper will look at the most notable negative impacts including loneliness and feeling disconnected, neglecting other aspects of life, self-esteem issues, cyberbullying, eating disorders, and promotion of self-harm and suicide.

1.   **Loneliness and feeling disconnected**

In the last twenty-five years, anxiety and depression has increased by 70% in young people (Royal Society for Public Health, and Young Health Movement, 2017, as cited in Keles *et al*., 2019, p.1). Social media is largely regarded as a cause and explanation for this decline in young people's mental health (Bell *et al*., 2019, p. 88). While social media preys on the notion of connectivity, whereby adolescents using social media gain wider connections, these are often shallower than in-person relationships. This can make adolescents feel more disconnected and lonelier (Davey, 2016).

2. Neglecting other aspects of life

Social media are designed to keep users active on their sites for as long as possible (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 90). This may mean they begin to neglect other important aspects of their lives (Nodder, 2013 as cited in Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 162). Adolescents' use of social media may become excessive and addictive. Problematic social media use is considered to exist if a person is online for over six hours a day (Bányai *et al*., 2017). Adolescents with such high usage often have a negative outlook on life, and report having mood problems, being disengaged, lonely, or bullied at school (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 161). Research is ongoing as to what comes first, problematic internet use or a negative life satisfaction (Rafla *et al*., 2014, p. 4).

The therapist needs to work with the teenager to help reduce their dependency on social media, while helping them redirect their efforts to using the internet for more purposeful activities (OECD, 2017 as cited in Betton and Woolard, 2018, p. 165), and look for educational, creative and civic participation to reorient them to positive online activity (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 165/6).

3. Self-esteem issues

Through social media the adolescent can remain in constant communication with peers, and it is deemed necessary by them to respond to people straight away. When they are not on social media adolescents can feel excluded and tend to have FOMO (fear of missing out) of what their peers are up to on it (Bell *et al*., p. 93). The constant communication through social media can cause psychological distress in adolescents as well as reducing their self-esteem (Rosenthal *et al*., 2016). Low self-esteem can be born out of negative responses to what the adolescent puts out on their social media (Rafla *et al*., 2014, p.5). Adolescents are

constantly managing how they are perceived by others online, wanting to present themselves in a favourable way. Bell *et al*. (2019, p. 93) describe adolescents use of social media as being "actors on the stage of life".

This constant self-monitoring impacts their self-esteem. It is now much harder for an adolescent to forget anything, as everything remains online (Davies and Eynon, 2013, p. 76). The therapist must be aware that the adolescent may need respite from this but may not know it as they are too enmeshed with their world of social media. The therapist will need to gradually tease out with the adolescent how their social media use is impacting their life.

4. **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying permeates through the victim's social media and online presence, meaning the victim is constantly confronted by it, making it impossible for them to escape or forget it (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 135). Cyberbullying is open to a wider audience through social media, making it even more intense for the victim, and the harmful content remains present as it lives online, available for the victim to see over and over again (Van Geel, Vedder, and Tanilon, 2014, p. 440).

Adolescents are unsure what to do and how to protect themselves against cyberbullying (Livingstone *et al*., 2017). The therapist must play an important role in guiding them forward and facilitating them to talk about it in an open way (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 139).

If the therapist is working with a cyberbully, they must explore with their client how they feel as a result of the invisibility and anonymity that being online allows, and why they behave in disinhibited and cruel ways.

The therapist must create a bridge between their behaviour and the impact it will have on the victims, making them aware of the results of their actions (Bell *et al*., 2019, p. 93).

5. Eating disorders

There is a positive association between Facebook use and disordered eating in girls (Holland and Tiggemann, 2016). Eating disorders are now developing at a younger age in adolescents than ever before, and social media is deemed one of the reasons behind this (Bert, Gualano, Camussi and Siliquini, 2015, p. 10). Social media is very visual based, and promotes an idealised image for teenagers, which leads to constant comparison between themselves, their peers, and celebrities (McLean *et al*., 2017). There is a strong link between these images, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in teenagers (Tiggemann and Slater, 2013). The sharing of selfies has been linked to greater body dissatisfaction than any other activity on social media (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 155).

People with eating disorders often try to keep their condition secret from others and social media offers a tool for them to search for support and advice on their disorders (Bert, *et al*, 2015, p. 5). There is a strong subculture on social media that provides peer support and encourages adolescents with eating disorders to maintain and continue in their practices (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 156; Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 77).

The therapist needs to be aware and familiar with the destructive practices on social media around eating disorders. It is vital that the therapist sees the world through their client's eyes and helps them make decisions around their health and social media use to promote a healthy relationship with food (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 158).

6. Promotion of self-harm and suicide

Adolescence is a time in which emotions are high and raw, and felt at a deeper level. The teenager can often struggle with their mental health and may engage in self harm and having suicidal thoughts. Social media is now playing a role in raising awareness of young people's mental health and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, can have a positive impact, but with this it is argued it may also be encouraging the spread of self-harm and suicidal ideation (Bell *et al*., 2019, p. 92). Social media can be a private space where adolescents can learn more about self-harm and support for suicide, accessing forums that discuss both self-harm and suicide, encouraging this behaviour as opposed to advising the adolescents to seek help (Durkee, *et al*., 2011 p. 3939).

Adolescents need informal support around these topics which allows them to be listened to without judgment (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 141). There is a lot of shame and stigma around both self-harm and suicidal thoughts, and it can be very difficult for the adolescent to bring it up with the therapist. Adolescents who are self-harming or having suicidal thoughts are often sent to therapy by their parents who fear their actions, as opposed to going voluntarily. The therapist must be aware of this, working hard to build the therapeutic alliance and allowing this to happen naturally over time. The therapist should be armed with resources to encourage the teenager to make positive choices around self-harm when they are ready to hear it. The therapist needs to work with the adolescent to use social media as a tool to help them as opposed to it being a driving force behind their actions (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 142).

7. Conclusion

The constant social comparison which adolescents now experience through social media can have a negative impact on the adolescent's identity, creating an ever-present anxiety within them (Bell *et al*., 2019, p. 94). It is believed that there is a direct correlation between social media use and mental health problems,

but as it is an extremely complex mix of elements it is difficult to simplify into specific root causes (Keles *et al*., 2019, p.10). It is not possible to distinguish whether social media causes depression, anxiety or psychological distress, or whether those with depression, anxiety, or psychological distress spend more time on social media, have negative interactions with it, and make poorer decisions in their usage of it (Keles *et al*., 2019, p.11).

However, it is extremely important that the therapist is aware of the dangers and potentially negative relationship between adolescents and social media, along with the positive impacts detailed in the previous chapter. This paper will offer a comparison of the positive and negative impacts of social media on adolescents in the next chapter and outline the role of the therapist when working with this.

CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS

There is a lot of truth in Keles *et al*. (2019) description of social media being "a double-edged sword". There are many positive and negative attributes to it, meaning it is difficult to determine what impact it will have on the adolescent. Research to date has been quite inconclusive on the effects of social media and has focused more on its negative impacts. Indeed, there has been no specific research on how the therapist should best engage with adolescents around their social media use. This is an area that requires immediate research.

From the positive and negative impacts of social media referenced in this paper, four particular comparisons will be identified and considered below.

1. **Friendship versus cyberbullying**

Social media's primary function for adolescents is friendship, both maintaining and making new ones. Social media is an open platform for constant communication between peers which helps adolescents build their social and communication skills with a wider network of people. Friendships are at the core of adolescents' existence.

While many adolescents see the openness of social media as a positive for connection, the negative side of this is when cyberbullying permeates through the platform. When this happens, cyberbullying becomes a constant in the adolescent's life as they are always accessible through social media, and the victim often feels there is no escaping it (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 75). Given the openness of the social media platform,

cyberbullying can easily escalate. It should be noted that cyberbullying is a bigger worry for adults and parents than for teenagers (Betton and Woolard, 2018, p. 137).

Therefore, the open platform which adolescents see as central for friendships can also be crushing for them around bullying. More research is needed around adolescents and how they manage cyberbullying, and what support they need from their therapist.

2. Self-Esteem – building versus knocking

Social media is a place where adolescents go to talk about things they are too embarrassed to talk about face-to-face. Social media offers them security and can in turn build their confidence. Their self-esteem also builds when they receive positive feedback from what they present online (Reid and Weigle, 2014).

However, in presenting themselves on social media, adolescents can also get negative feedback which knocks their self-esteem. They strive to be perceived positively and negative responses can affect their mental health. As they seek external approval online, they are constantly self-monitoring themselves, which has a negative impact on their self-esteem (Guinta and John, 2018).

Social media has the capacity to both build and knock the adolescent's self-esteem. Further research is needed into how to protect the adolescent from negative feedback they are open to receiving from social media and the therapist's role in this.

3. Self-identity formation and body image versus eating disorders

Adolescence is a time for experimenting with image and ideas about oneself, while gauging the approval of peers. Social media gives adolescents the space to experiment with their identity more and to a broader audience (Davies and Eynon, 2013).

However, social media presents an idealised body image which adolescents absorb and strive to attain, making them feel a need to look a certain way. This idealised body image can become a pressure for adolescents. In striving for "the perfect body" the adolescent may develop an eating disorder, which can then be exacerbated by social media (McLean *et al*., 2017).

While social media can be an open platform for many to experiment with their identity, it can also be a place for adolescents to hide behaviours such as eating disorders from others by discussing it only on anonymous forums. They get support from these forums, but the support can be positive or negative. It can be positive in trying to give them help to overcome the eating disorder, but more often they are negative and dangerous in encouraging the adolescent to maintain their eating disorder.

Further research is needed into whether social media hinders the therapeutic alliance for adolescents with eating disorders.

4. Self-harm and suicide - support versus encouragement

There is a huge amount of stigma around self-harm and suicidal ideation. Social media offers a safe haven for adolescents to talk about their ideations or actions, and to gain support of others in similar situations.

However, while accessing this support, adolescents are faced with ideas and encouragement around both self-harm and suicide (Durkeel *et al*., 2011). Many forums promote the idea that both self-harm and suicide are the right actions for the adolescent to take, and the adolescent's actions can be influenced by this.

It is difficult to determine what the adolescent will grasp from these forums – positive support or negative encouragement. They need the support of how to navigate through the good and the bad information on their social media. More research is needed into how to guide the adolescent towards support around self-harm on social media and distancing from the dangerous encouragement.

CHAPTER 5 - ROLE OF THERAPIST

Therapists have an important role in helping the teenager to have healthy interactions on social media and to use it as a positive tool (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 83).

In the first clinical meeting with the adolescent, it is recommended that their internet and social media habits be assessed by the therapist (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 78). In the assessment, the therapist should explore the time they're spending on social media, and how and what the adolescent is presenting online. The therapist will need to explore information which the adolescent might not want to discuss initially such as risky online behaviour, self-harming, or eating disorders, and it might be better to explore these again once the therapeutic alliance is established. It's important that the therapist explores what the adolescent enjoys about being on social media and its positive attributes on their life (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 78).

The therapist must endeavour to work with the teenager around appropriate use of social media and the potential risks it may have on their lives. In helping them to reflect on risks they may have taken online, it will help the teenager develop psychological resilience online (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 107). The therapist must also address how the adolescent's behaviour online affects others. Their behaviour online may be linked with them feeling anxious, depressed or having poor self-esteem, and this is something the therapist will need to tease out carefully with the adolescent while exploring the risks and effects that social media might be having on them (Reid and Weigle, 2014, p. 78).

Instead of addressing social media as a whole, the therapist should be exploring the nuances of the adolescent's use of it, and how they are functioning within their use (Pagnotta *et al*., 2018, p. 338). The therapist must encourage the adolescent to think critically about their social media use, while also helping them become less reliant on it. They will need to help build the adolescent's self-esteem and sense of identity so that it doesn't rely so heavily on external stimuli and approval (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 100).

It can be helpful to explore what state of mind the adolescent is in when they engage in their social media use, and how this impacts their emotional response to content (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 107). This starts to build a deeper awareness of their behaviour and can begin to create a more mindful practice around their use.

The therapist must understand that as their peers become central to the adolescent's world, it is their sense of self in the context of their peers that is important, and this is what they find most rewarding on social media (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 107). The therapist must work with the teen to build a greater sense of self, both as an individual and as part of their peers.

If the adolescent does seem to be spending excessive time online, the therapist must help them recognise this of their own accord, and then work together to regulate their activities on social media (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 166). The therapist can also help the adolescent explore how they put their social media use to more creative or civic endeavours which can help build their self-worth and self-esteem. They can help young people balance passive consumption of social media with more active creation of content, blending online knowledge with offline activities (Betton and Woollard, 2018, p. 81).

Overall, the therapist plays a significant role and must keep a vigilant awareness of the developments in social media, and the consequent dangers and negative impacts which it may pose to adolescents.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Social media remains a relatively new area. Despite ongoing studies into the effects of social media on the user, the findings remain inconclusive and a lot remains unknown and ambiguous around the effects of social media on adolescents. There is scope for a great deal more research to be done in the area.

Further, it is believed there is a direct link between social media use and mental health problems, but it remains unclear as to what exactly causes mental health problems in this relationship between the two. Whether social media causes mental health issues, or if those with mental health problems have negative interactions on social media based on their underlying mental health, is yet to be discovered.

This paper has shown that a lack of parental or adult understanding around social media can alienate the adolescent. The therapeutic alliance is dependent on the therapist understanding the adolescent's world fully, and this incorporates their social media use. In exploring what the therapist needs to know about social media, this paper has shown that therapists have an important role in supporting and guiding the adolescent in their social media use. The therapist needs to be competent around social media so that they can help develop interventions if needed. They should be fully aware of both the positive and negative impacts social media can have on the adolescent.

In identifying the role of the therapist in the adolescent's social media use, this paper has found a number of learnings for the therapist when working with adolescents. The therapist should take into account and assess the adolescent's social media from the beginning, acknowledging whether it is a central force it is in the young person's life. The therapist should then guide the adolescent on the appropriate use of social

media, making them aware of the risks and effects that social media has on their life. He or she must work with the adolescent to get them to think critically about their use of social media so that they engage more mindfully with it. Overall, the therapist must work on building the adolescent's sense of self so that they become less reliant on social media for their self-esteem and seeking external approval.

Finally, the therapist must keep up to date on social media practices due to the ever-changing nature of the platform, as it is essential that they stay current with them. Due to the rapidly changing nature of social media, as apps quickly become popular and then disappear, the therapist's knowledge and strategies may become outdated if they fail to keep consciously appraised of latest developments. As the adolescent deems the therapist informed, the therapeutic alliance can grow.

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