

A new survey, [Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences](#), of 1,141 teens ages 13-to-17, was released yesterday. Today, I will discuss how teens responded about their emotional experiences with social media. In upcoming Tech Talk Tuesdays, I will delve into other aspects of this study.

One essential question the survey asks is “***Does social media make you feel more or less depressed?***” The majority (81%) of respondents said that social media “doesn’t make much difference either way,” 16% said less depressed, and 3% said more depressed.

While it is important for science to get this big picture-type of an answer, it’s key to remember that **teens are feeling all sorts of emotions** even if they say that the overall impact is neutral. When teens are using Snapchat, Instagram, and such, they are experiencing many “micro-emotions”—bits of joy, jealousy, laughter, disappointment, closeness, and many others.

All teens in the survey answered questions about their social-emotional well-being (SEWB). This identified ones who had low social-emotional well-being (sad, lonely, etc), and those with a high social-emotional well-being. If a respondent had low SEWB, they were much more likely to report negative reactions to social media. For example, one question asked: Does social media make you feel depressed? Among the students in the low SEWB group, 11% said yes, while in the high SEWB 0% said yes.

These findings above do not surprise me, think of self-comparison, feeling left out, and jealousy. What does surprise me is that the teens, who scored low, are **more likely** than their peers to say that social media caused a **positive impact** on them.

For example:

Does social media make you feel more confident? Among the students in the low SEWB 23% said yes, while only 12% of the high SEWB said yes.

One could have thought that being in a low emotional state would make even potentially positive things not positive. One reason why they are more likely to report a positive is that many will use online platforms to feel better, by doing something like SnapChatting or texting a close friend.

Although clearly there are positives aspects of social media, it is so important that we stay tuned into our teens that are struggling emotionally because they are more susceptible to negative experiences on social media. Having ongoing, caring conversations with our teens about how to maximize the upside of social media and minimize the downsides is crucial. It is important to know that Increased face-to-face time has consistently been correlated with better emotional well-being. Time away from screens is critical for so many aspects of youth development.

For this Tech Talk Tuesday let's talk with our teens about this survey. Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- How would you answer questions on the survey such as, overall does social media make you feel more or less confident? Or no impact? More or less depressed? Or no impact? More or less lonely? Or no impact?
- What are some examples of when you experience negative feelings on social media? Positive feelings?
- Many teens do things to limit excessive social media use—as I've talked about in my [past TTTs](#)—what do you do to limit excessive use?