

**It's Time to Ditch Your Social Media, You'll Be Better Off:
5 Takeaways from a Social Media Free Life in 2022
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In May 2012, I downloaded a new app called Instagram and took my first foray into social media. Over time, I gradually added more apps, each with a specific purpose in mind, peaking with Instagram (*how could I not*), Snapchat (*fun communication with friends*), Facebook (*college networking purposes*), and TikTok (*2020 was a hard year*).

Then, I just deleted them.

After scrolling through all my apps before bed one night, I thought to myself, “what did the last 20 minutes just add to my life?” When I couldn’t answer the question, I deleted everything. Waking up the next morning, I felt a freedom I hadn’t felt in a very long time. Instead of immediately checking social media, I got right out of bed without comparing myself to someone else on a screen, feeling anxious over a news story, or making sure I was “all caught up”.

While the decision may seem hastily made, it was set in motion after I watched the Netflix documentary, *The Social Dilemma*. This documentary, which talks about the unethical behavior of social media companies and its effect on our lives, fundamentally changed the way I look at social media and I believe it is a must-see for everyone.

When social media was invented, it quickly became clear that a free platform couldn’t exist. Therefore, we entered into a new type of business agreement, one that swaps the sale of our time, and data, for a “free” service. Do you think you could put a dollar amount to your self-worth? Don’t worry, the social media companies have it figured out for you. Meta (Facebook) reports a

metric in their annual report called average revenue per user, and in 2021 your worth to the company was \$40.96. Our lives, whittled down to less than the cost of a night out.

Think about the amount of time you've spent on the explore page of Instagram or the 'For You' page on TikTok—that was not an accident. Tech companies have an incentive to keep us on their platforms, so we watch more advertisements. Meta even writes this in their annual report, “trends in the number of people in our community affect our revenue and financial results by influencing the number of ads we are able to show...”. This bold transparency is horrifying, our actions directly affected Meta's 117-billion-dollar revenue in 2021. Given the choice between your well-being or the opportunity to make more money, what do you think Meta will choose?

While I recognize social media has had powerful effects, especially in a year of isolation, without real regulation or change I can't see how social media will make us better off. It has now become actively harder to live without social media than it is to live with social media. Is that a good thing?

My detox may have started as a reaction to learning more about social media companies, but in the past year I have seen real changes in my life and a massive improvement to my mental health. To celebrate a year off social media and to give you 5 reasons to ditch these apps, here are the top 5 things I have noticed:

Number 1

I Live in the Moment More

After being on social media for so long, habits like taking a picture of food and tagging the location or posting pictures with friends became second nature. Without those avenues to post, I no longer feel the need to perfectly frame pictures or worry about aesthetics for other people. When I am with my friends, I enjoy their time and presence. When I am not with friends, I don't have constant FOMO.

Number 2

My Politics Are More Grounded

As someone who is politically involved, my feed was inundated with posts about current events and social justice. The constant news, opinions, and need to “prove” my activism began to take a real toll on my mental health and anxiety. I would also see two radical sides on my feed from conservative and liberal friends, posting their opinions on the same story. Now, when I hear about a news story, I can process it, then react. In social media we only see the curated story and react instantly.

Number 3

Social Media Has Now Become Synonymous With Society

The day after deleting social media it became glaringly obvious how ingrained these platforms were in my life. All aspects of our lives are on these apps, like communication, business information, or knowing when a birthday is for a friend (this has been super hard). As a Taylor Swift fan, it kills me not knowing the exact second she is going to announce

something new on social media. People have even remarked that it is “sketchy” that I don’t use social media, as if I am doing something horribly wrong.

Number 4

I Took My Time Back

Let me be real with you, no I didn’t delete social media and become a superhuman. I don’t wake up at 5am now and work all day without stopping. However, I do see tangible effects of the time I have taken back. I find myself reallocating my time towards things that make me feel better and activities that relax me. The time I would be spending on my phone I now use to watch my favorite shows, read, or simply hang out with friends and family.

Number 5

My Mental Health Has Improved and I am Happier

The most important effect on my life has been the improvement of my mental health. Combining the prior points has led to a new outlook on life and my happiness. I no longer need the validation of random strangers liking my pictures to feel good-looking. I no longer compare myself to my peers who all have perfect lives. And I no longer use social media as a digital pacifier for my anxiety, I tackle things head on and live my life the way I want it to be lived.

Tomorrow, 1.93 billion people will access Facebook, 500 million people will access Instagram, and 217 million people will access Twitter. As I head into tomorrow, I am excited to not be included in these numbers and to continue experiencing more days untethered to social media. Living life on your own terms can be scary, but the effects are undeniable. It’s time to ditch your social media, you’ll be better off.