Social Media Outage - Maybe Time to Log Out?

A few days ago, a social media outage resulted in a breakdown of services from WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. The disruption was fairly short but resulted in significant chaos in the world of social media, highlighting how reliant people have become on these applications.

Many people panicked and found it challenging to cope with the situation. However, when it was revealed that this was a “global” breakdown, people became much less anxious because they understood that others were also experiencing the same problem.

Based on the world’s reaction to this “short” outage, it is evident that people have developed a bizarre relationship with social media. The fear of not having anything to do or the fear of missing out on what others might be doing is preoccupying a large part of the population today. An outage such as the one we experienced a few days ago highlights the importance of breaking this dependence and realising the value of real relationships instead of those via Facebook or Instagram.

People are too involved and too invested in social media. Too much time is spent checking Facebook or Instagram, scrolling through news feeds, and posting status updates, photos and other personal details. According to Pew Research Center’s 2021 data, seven in 10 Facebook users in the U.S. say they visit the site at least once a day, while 49% report that they visit the site several times a day. Likewise, 59% of people visit Instagram once a day, while 38% visit the site several times in one day.

Is it time to log out? Is it time to break free from this social media addiction? Experts seem to think so. According to Dr Anna Lembke, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, social media can be addictive because human connection stimulates dopamine release. Anything that stimulates dopamine has the potential to be addictive, she says.

The recent outage is an indicator of how addicted people are to Facebook. John Duffy, a therapist, says that people who are on social media the most tend to be the loneliest. Simply posting on Facebook, commenting on other people’s posts, or messaging people does not translate into a real connection. It is just a digital form of communication and can be highly impersonal.

It might not be a bad idea to log out from all social media platforms and take a break. A one-month vacation from selected social media apps could help reset our brains and allow us to rekindle relationships that have suffered because of our preoccupation with digital communication. It might also be a good idea to disable alerts or uninstall these apps completely for a month or more.

There is no doubt that social media platforms can have positive effects and have allowed people to establish connections with distant friends and loved ones. However, there is a limit to how occupied we become with these applications. Anything in the extreme is bad for one’s health. And social media is no different.

So here’s a thought. Why not log out and/or uninstall social media apps from your phone and see how you get along? It may do all of us a lot of good in the long run.

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