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**Can you really switch off to switch on? Social media and addiction**

Social media has become an integral part of our everyday lives. It has changed the way we communicate, conduct business and get our daily news updates. Social media has enabled individuals to create a sense of belonging and redefine their way of being. Numerous platforms have allowed users to create a community wherein individuals share their creative ideas and daily activities and so much more with people across the globe, at any given time. This community is growing at great speed with social media usage on the rise. The number of social media users worldwide is approximately 3.196 billion in 2018; this increase is 13 percent year-on-year (Global Web Index, 2018). There are numerous benefits to social media usage, despite this, there is a dark side. For many, we do not realize how much time we spend scrolling through digital feeds, photos and walls. The constant exposure to news, new trends and millions of international users creates overwhelming pressures for some. Social media is addictive, that much is clear from the sharp increase year over year in how much time we spend on it. Increasing concerns have been raised about the negative impact of excessive use of social networking sites on the health and wellbeing of users, especially that of young people, who are enthusiastic users of this technology. Many people's social media use is habitual and can start to spill over into other areas of their lives and be problematic and dangerous, such as checking social media while driving. There are now many issues that are correlated with social media, such as the development of social media and social anxiety disorder, loneliness and low self-esteem. So how can we protect ourselves from all these potential issues? Can we really realistically delete our social media long term? The question is how can we both embrace and engage with social media in a positive way? What is key to a healthy balance?

**Biography**

Hajra Hussain is a Chartered Psychologist accredited by the British Psychology Society with over ten years' experience in psychology and health behavior change. She is also an accredited Positive Psychology Coach and holds an MSc in Health Psychology. Her expertise is of the use of positive psychology as a catalyst to self-empowerment. Upon establishing well-being services (public and private sectors) and honing her skills across five continents in the education, health and retail sectors, she has worked at the heart of diverse cultures and communities. She is currently a Clinical Counselor at the American University of Sharjah. Whilst in the UAE, she has pioneered "The Big Happiness Project" initiative, which focused on individual happiness through engagement of the government and corporate sector and the wider community as a whole.

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