

Staying Well Online: How does social media work



In this easy read, we will talk about social media, how social media works and how it can affect your wellbeing.



Social media is a way for people to create, see and share thoughts, ideas and information on the internet.



Apps and websites like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X (Twitter) and YouTube are all social media sites.



Social media can be a great way to stay in touch with family and friends and share information.



Social media can also affect your mental wellbeing, what you think of yourself, and what you think of the world.



Most social media websites are free to use. Websites like Facebook or YouTube make money by showing you adverts.



Al-go-rith-um

The people who make social media websites want to make lots of money.

People who make social media websites make them in a clever way. They use something called an **algorithm**. Here is how an **algorithm** works:



When you use a social media website, the **algorithm** learns about you, the things you like and the things you are interested in.



Social media **algorithms** show you things you are interested in to keep you looking at the website. Showing you adverts then earns the website money.



If you see something on a social media website that you are interested in, you might click on it or watch a video about it. For example, cats.

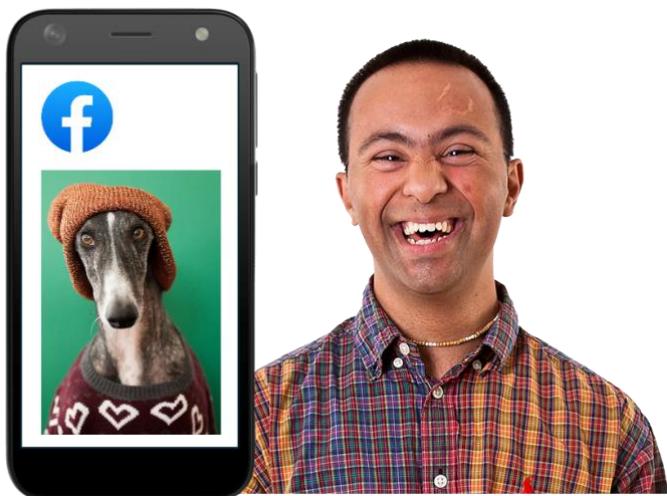
The social media **algorithm** then learns that you are interested in cats.



The social media **algorithm** will now show you information and adverts about cats, because it wants you to click on them.



If you click on or watch anything on a social media website, it will show you more things like it. You may have noticed this before.



This happens when you click on things that you find funny and things that interest you.



This also happens when you click on things that upset you and make you angry.



Seeing lots of things that make you angry and upset can affect your mental health.



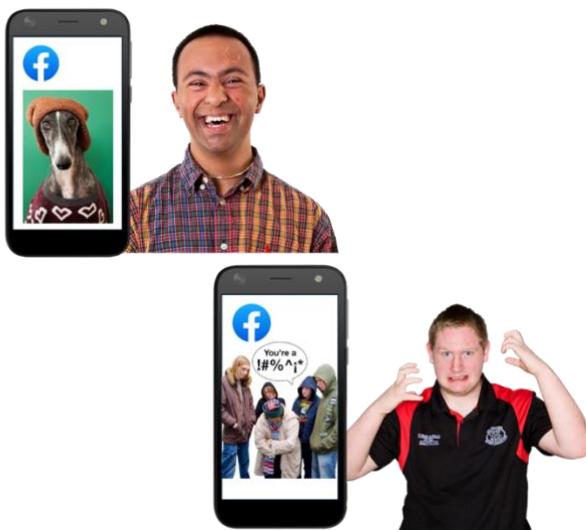
It can change how you feel about people and the world around you.



It can make you feel like things are worse in the world than they really are.



Remember, social media websites are made to keep you using them for as long as possible.



They will show you interesting things to click on or watch. These things can be things that you find funny or things that upset you.



If you feel that you are spending too much time on social media or feel that it is affecting your mental health, you can speak to someone for support.



Some smart phones also have timers you can use to stop you spending too long on social media apps or websites.



Many social media websites have options where you can tell it that you aren't interested in something. This way you can stop the website showing you things that upset you.



Look after yourself! Eat healthy food, get good sleep and stay active. Even light exercise will help your body and mind!



Keep your mind busy by doing activities and hobbies that don't use screens, such as reading or crafts.



Spend more time with friends and family or meet new people by joining groups or doing some volunteering!



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