

Why Social Media Should Not Be a Middle School Habit

By the time you turn thirteen, you're technically old enough to make a social media account. TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, they all say the door's open. No one really checks. You type in a birth year, hit 'OK,' and just like that, you're in.

Thirteen is strange. You're not a little kid anymore, but you're nowhere near being grown up either. Everything's changing, including your body, your brain, and your sense of self, and half the time, it feels like nothing fits. Now imagine trying to figure all that out while standing in front of a crowd. That's what being online can feel like. These platforms are built for people who've had time to grow into themselves. People who know what it means to be seen and what it means to look away.

But kids are stepping into these spaces way before they're ready. The pace is fast, the pressure is constant, and almost everyone's performing, even when it doesn't look like it. What starts as fun can quickly turn confusing.

Scrolling never looks dangerous. That's part of the problem. It feels harmless, just some videos, a few likes, maybe a funny meme or two. But it adds up. Slowly, quietly, kids start comparing themselves to what they see. Faces filtered to look flawless. Bodies edited without a single mark. Posts that scream confidence, even when the person behind the screen feels completely lost. That kind of feed shapes how kids see themselves, even if no one's talking about it.

They start chasing likes like it means something. They run into content that's too mature, too intense, and they do not have the tools yet to process it. It's not about one bad post or one toxic trend. It's the constant stream, whispers that tell them who matters and who doesn't. What's cool, what's not. What you should be, and what you never will be. Studies keep showing the damage: rising anxiety, worsening body image, even depression. And while adults struggle too, most grown-ups have at least some distance. Most kids don't. They take it all in.

That does not mean we should ban all teens from social media. That's not realistic, and it's not the point. But what do we have right now? It is not working. A 'type your birthdate' check is a joke. What if there were different versions of platforms, built for different ages? What if algorithms didn't shove the most viral, shocking content at kids, but focused instead on connection, learning, or creativity? That would be a real start.

We also need to teach digital literacy, how to spot fake news, manage screen time, and understand how certain content affects your mood.



Right now, most kids are figuring that out on their own, and not always with great results.

People love to say it's all up to parents. But anyone who's tried parenting in the digital age knows how hard that really is. Even the most involved parents can't monitor everything. These apps are designed to pull you in and keep you there. If tech companies can figure out how to serve you ads based on your mood, they can figure out how to keep younger users safe. It shouldn't all fall on families. The platforms that profit from attention need to take more responsibility for what that attention costs.

Giving kids a little more time offline isn't about fear. It's about care. It's about letting them grow into themselves before they step into a space that magnifies everything. We already have age limits for driving, drinking, voting, full-time jobs, because we know life experience matters. So why is social media any different?

Childhood moves fast enough on its own. We don't need to rush it with likes, comment sections, and the pressure to always be 'on.' Let's give kids a chance to grow quietly without an audience, without a stage, just time, space, and room to become who they are before the internet tells them who they are.

