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BEST OF THE WEEK PERSPECTIVE

Why I'm Quitting Social Media

By Alexa Goins | February 23, 2015   0 Comments

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When 2015 rolled around, I made it one of my resolutions to "be present". It's a vague statement that could mean anything. But it forced me to reevaluate my habits and figure out where I wasn't being fully present, where I had distractions.

Social media stared me in the face.

Now, I'm not a huge social media person to begin with. I don't use Twitter or Instagram and I'm not a Tumblr girl. I really only use Pinterest to plan my future wedding. So these weren't part of the problem for me.

Facebook, on the other hand, began to bother me. I didn't like the way it made me feel and act. I realized that in some small ways it changed me.

I first joined back in 2009 as an awkward 14 year old, high school freshman and stayed on the site for 6 years. Facebook made me overly curious about people who didn't actually care about me in real life, people I don't even speak to regularly. It wasn't connecting me with the people who mattered, but it gave me knowledge (sometimes too much) about random acquaintances.

Think about it. Do I really need to know that that girl from my high school geometry class got engaged? Do I really need to stalk said engagement photos for 10 minutes? Nope. It's crazy to think of how much time we're actually wasting on something so insignificant. When we can find out what everyone we know is doing just by scrolling through a newsfeed, we gain a false sense of communication. But we're not actually keeping in touch with those people.

Over-sharing. I've done it, you've done it. We're all pretty guilty of this. Social media's done a great job of giving people a place to express themselves online, but when you think about it, we've become a lot of over-sharers. Let's face it, you don't care that I ordered a Mocha Frappuccino at Starbucks and I don't care about what you did last night. But that doesn't stop us from sharing photos of this stuff with everyone we've ever met. Life is so much more precious when it's shared with loved ones who actually care, instead of an online "friends" list.

I became insecure. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that sometimes I scrolled through my newsfeed and became angry, jealous and insecure. *Why?* All because someone else seemed to be having the time of their life while I sat in my dorm room alone. Our generation has the power to meet someone and ten minutes later know "everything" about them based off of that person's online persona. We're living in the time of the "Highlight Reel" where anyone can make their life seem amazing if they post the right things. But it's not hard to realize that these posts can be deceiving. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter profiles aren't accurate portrayals of a person's life and they certainly shouldn't cause unnecessary insecurity in our lives.

So while I'm technically not leaving all social media for good, I am quitting the concept of social media. I'm not going to let it control me or consume my time. And as of today, my Facebook account has been permanently deleted. It's gone. Dunzo. Obliterated forever.

And I could not be more relieved to now help make up the 29% of online adults who don't use Facebook.

Some could argue that because I'm no longer a part of the 71%, I'm missing out on memories and soon-to-be historical news events, but I can say with confidence that I'm not. In the past couple weeks I've spent without Facebook, I've connected with high school friends, college classmates and family more than I ever did while I was on the site. Why? Because I had to. I was forced to pick up the phone and call or FaceTime or send a quick "How're classes going?" text because I no longer had the option of scrolling through a feed to see what everyone was doing.

We stare at our phones and computer screens and feel like we're connecting with each other, but we're really not. We "like" each other's photos, but those "likes" don't translate into real life. There's no substitute for face-to-face human connection and friendship, at least not one that will satisfy you.

While I get that not everyone feels as extremely as I do on the subject, maybe it's time for us all to evaluate our social media habits. Maybe it's time to put down the phone and log off the computer, just for a little while. Because life is so much better #IRL (in real life).