



I tried a social media detox

RASHA JAMEEL

Just a couple of months ago, I had a personal account on every social networking site: Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tumblr, Reddit, LinkedIn, TikTok, you name it.

I spent an unhealthy amount of time every day either doomscrolling, or just engaging in comment wars left and right. Before I knew it, I couldn't enjoy quality time with my friends or family without documenting it on social media first.

I NEEDED TO SNAP OUT OF IT.

"It'll be like ripping off a Band-Aid," I told myself. One fine day, I grabbed my phone and impulsively proceeded to uninstall every single one of my social media apps. I didn't reinstall any of them for the next five months.

Here's what I discovered in the period of time I spent away from social media.

Decreased exposure to anxiety triggers online

As someone struggling with anxiety disorders, I often get easily affected by certain visual content found online. Continuous interaction with social networking apps resulted in either my anxiety skyrocketing or my depression intensifying.

After I distanced myself from social media for a significant amount of time, it dawned on me that I felt much less stressed than when I was going through my social media feed. Instead of taking in a large amount of online content at a faster rate, I was taking it slow, processing one thought at a time while I cleared my head of specific sensory triggers.

INCREASED AMOUNT OF SPARE TIME

I had more time on my hands every day. All those hours I used to spend tapping away at my phone's keypad, were finally being put to better use.

Not only did I have more time to work, but I was also able to devote an additional amount of time to things that genuinely made me happy, my hobbies and such. Extended periods of doomscrolling gradually became replaced by more productive hours of scrapbooking and journaling.

A HEALTHIER LEVEL OF INTERACTIVITY WITH THE PHONE

Prior to my break from social media, I'd never kept a count of how many times I checked my social media feeds. Logging into the five different apps on my phone every few minutes was practically routine.

For someone who couldn't go longer than 20 minutes at a stretch without logging in to Facebook, resisting the impulse to just tap the blue app icon proved to be quite the task. Deleting the app meant that I was no longer (a) up to date with all the chatter on social media, and (b) staying awake till 4 AM going through the comments section of a viral post.

I recently reinstalled two of the social media apps I used to have on my phone. Thus far, I've been limiting the amount of time I spend on each app and I no longer lose sleep over an anxiety-inducing Facebook post. I'm happy to announce that the social detox has been an absolute success.

You can bring the author up to speed on all that she's missed out on social media lately by dropping a note at rasha.jameel@outlook.com

The Art of Humourising Everything

Or the sheer lack of art in it

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

A few days back, a status popped up in my feed, which had some 500+ shares and around 2000 Haha reactions. It simply said, "Neither do I have the brains nor the looks. Why do I even exist?" in Bangla, with a smiley face at the end.

There's no well-established joke or any clever multi-layered pun here. It's just straightforward mumblings of a frustrated teenager, which 2000 people found funny, if we are naive enough to take Facebook reactions seriously.

It's not the humour, however, rather its relatability that's the selling point here. We are a generation that's accustomed to laughing at our own misery and using humour as our only defence mechanism. Although using internet memes as a substitute for clinical therapy might sound like a bad decision (and probably is), discovering a crowd of people sharing the same frustration, anxiety and depression as you, works wonders.

Even 15 years back, screwing up at your academics would make you feel lonely and depressed. Now, the meme culture dedicated to ranting about our education system somehow helps get over that frustration.

Things get a bit problematic when we relocate from this relatability factor of ranting through "shitposting" and consider it to be more of a responsibility. It starts with the recognition as an "internet memer" and a shot at social media validation. At some point, ideas stop coming. Yet, you can't. You have an imaginary quota to fill and social media points to gain. And then it happens - you cross the line. The invisible line of humour that separates "just a dank joke" from "plain offensive" and the line with which we

tend to skip rope.

Where do you draw this line? Is there a line to begin with? If so, then who chooses where to draw it?

No matter how offensive something might seem to you, there's always an audience for that sick joke somewhere in this creepy wonderland. Is it truly insensitive of him or is it your threshold of tolerance that's a bit too low? On the internet, you can make the most politically correct joke about three polar bears entering a bar and yet trigger someone enough to get cancelled. If we do take everyone's sensitivity into account, the glorious culture of self-deprecating millennial humour will lose its charm. It's all just a loop of questions with no definitive answer.

But does that snatch away our self-proclaimed right of making fun of our own tragedy? It doesn't. You can crack a joke about our national misery but not the victims of that misery. A joke about our poverty, weak financial infrastructure, unsafe streets and sickening culture of extortionist capitalism? Sure. One about a homeless guy who lost his everything due to the pandemic and died in a car crash? NO.

Humour has no grand pious intention. It cannot start a revolution, topple a dictator, or reshape the world order. It's simply how we choose to dump our frustration by laughing at our own tragedy. As victims, if not humour as our only language, then what? Reaching out for professional help, constructive criticism or protest for changes, just like in the old days?

How lame.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburashidifti@gmail.com

