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SOCIAL MEDIA IS HARMING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENAGERS

The digital landscape has put increased pressure on teenagers today, and we feel it. There are so many media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, you name it. I made a conscious decision to avoid Snapchat and Instagram because of the social pressure I saw them putting on my 14-year-old little sister. If my mum turned off the WIFI at 11pm, my little sister would beg me to turn my phone into a hotspot. She always needed to load her Snapchat stories one more time, or to reply to a message that had come in two minutes ago because she didn't want her friend to feel ignored. If I refused, saying she could respond in the morning, I'd get the « You're ruining my social life » speech. Even as a teenager as well, I sometimes find this craze a little baffling.

A new study has found that teenagers who engage with social media during the night could be damaging their sleep and increasing their risk of anxiety and depression. Teenagers spoke about the pressure they felt to make themselves available 24/7, and the resulting anxiety if they did not respond immediately to texts or posts. Teens are so emotionally invested in social media that a fifth of secondary school pupils will wake up at night and log on, just to make sure they don't miss out.

Perhaps the worst thing about this is that teenagers need more sleep than adults. Night-time social media use could be detrimental to their health. Research has shown that teenagers need 9.5 hours of sleep each night but on average only get 7.5 hours. (257)

Adapted from *The Guardian*
September 2015