Teenage social media use and coping with stress: the case of Alzheimer’s

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Past research has suggested that absence of social support in stressful situations increases the vulnerability of individuals (Cobb, 1976; Hobfoll and Walfish, 1984). Hence in stressful situations, such as taking care of Alzheimer’s patients at home, lends itself to individual vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities manifest themselves in the form of depression and anxiety. In the case of teenagers, who rely more on social media for their social interactions, there is a missing connection between stressful situations and management of their vulnerability.

In an era where technology and social media have become the norm, an individual’s online status has begun to overshadow their real life. Nowadays, teens are more likely to express their grief and emotion through social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. Posts expressing sorrow and sadness with captions such as “Rest in Peace Grandma” have become all too common. Knowing how much somebody cares about you and how you are feeling has shifted from heart to heart conversations in person to the amount of Instagram likes a ‘R.I.P’ post receives. In 2018, teenagers have become out of tune with coping mechanisms and are ill-informed on how they are supposed to deal with extreme feelings of grief and sorrow. Modern day techniques suitable for teens have not yet been created, yet, they are necessary.

Currently, most teenagers worldwide are not sure how they are supposed to deal with their emotions. Some decide to keep their feelings hidden and to ignore them, while others result in alcohol and other drugs. In an article reported by The Recovery Village, teenagers from the ages of 12-20 amount to 11% of the alcohol consumed in the United States. Much of this alcohol consumption may be derived from teens battling depression and feeling that alcohol or other drugs may help them not feel any pain. Teens are also less likely to talk to a parent about their coping with extreme emotional battles which may also lead to them hiding a potential addiction to alcohol and other drugs such as marijuana and nicotine. Another way teens may deal with a severe emotional scenario may be to turn their attention to social media. This, however, can result in teens using the internet as a place to hide. Teens believe that there is no need to have ‘real’ friends when they have friends online and that they have no need to show their feelings and emotions when they can hide on the internet.

Due to the ideology in teens that human interaction and expressing of emotion and feelings are unnecessary, a solution must be presented. One solution may be for the major social media platforms: Instagram and Snapchat, to offer in-person contact locations around the world for anyone experiencing an emotional issue to be able to come to and share their story. Though this project would require a substantial amount of money and human resources, this would have the major social media platforms encouraging its users, mostly teens, to share and traumatic or emotional feelings they have been withholding and to share them with someone they trust or a counselor. With these platforms taking part, celebrities may soon start to endorse these centers, prompting teens to decide and try them out. The power of social media may be the answer to solve the problem it has created.

References