



The Torch



Edition #23

How social media can crush your self-esteem

We all have a natural tendency to compare ourselves to others, whether intentionally or not, online or offline. Such comparisons help us evaluate our own achievements, skills, personality and our emotions. This, in turn, influences how we see ourselves.

But what impact do these comparisons have on our well-being? It depends on how much comparing we do.

Comparing ourselves on social media to people who are worse off than we are makes us feel better. Comparing ourselves to people who are doing better than us, however, makes us feel inferior or inadequate instead. The social media platform we choose also affects our morale, as do crisis situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a PhD student in psychology, I am studying incels — men who perceive the rejection of women as the cause of their involuntary celibacy. I believe that social comparison, which plays as much a role in these marginal groups as it does in the general population, affects our general well-being in the age of social media.

An optimal level of comparison

The degree of social comparison that individuals carry out is thought to affect the degree of motivation they have. According to a study by

researchers at Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany, there is an optimal level of perceived difference between the self and others that maximizes the effects of social comparison.



When people compare themselves to others who appear to be better off, they feel inferior, dissatisfied or inadequate. (Shutterstock)

Specifically, if we see ourselves as vastly superior to others, we will not be motivated to improve because we already feel that we are in a good position. Yet, if we perceive ourselves as very inferior, we will not be motivated to improve since the goal seems too difficult to achieve.

In other words, the researchers note, beyond or below the optimal level of perceived difference between oneself and another, a person no longer makes any effort. By perceiving oneself as inferior, the individual will experience negative emotions, guilt and lowered pride and self-esteem.

Unrealistic comparisons on social media

Social comparisons therefore have consequences both for our behaviour and for our psychological well-being. However, comparing yourself to others at a restaurant dinner does not necessarily have the same effect as comparing yourself to others on Facebook. It is easier to invent an exciting existence or embellish certain aspects of things on a social media platform than it is in real life.

The advent of social media, which allows us to share content where we always appear in our best light, has led many researchers to consider the possibility that this amplifies unrealistic comparisons.

Research shows that the more time people spend on Facebook and Instagram, the more they compare themselves socially. This social comparison is linked, among other things, to lower self-esteem and higher social anxiety.



Many people share only positive moments in their lives on social media. (Shutterstock)

A study conducted by researchers at the National University of Singapore explains these results by the fact that people generally present positive information about themselves on social media. They can also enhance their appearance by using filters, which create the impression that there is a big difference between themselves and others.

In turn, researchers working at Facebook observed that the more people looked at content where people were sharing positive aspects of their lives on the platform, the more likely they were to compare themselves to others.

COVID-19: Less negative social comparison

However, could the effect of this comparison in a particularly stressful context like the COVID-19 pandemic be different?

A study from researchers at Kore University in Enna, Italy, showed that before lockdowns, high levels of online social comparison were associated with greater distress, loneliness and a less satisfying life. But this was no longer the case during lockdowns.

One reason for this would be that by comparing themselves to others during the lockdown, people felt they were sharing the same difficult experience. That reduced the negative impact of social comparisons. So, comparing oneself to others online during difficult times can be a positive force for improving relationships and sharing feelings of fear and uncertainty.



The shared difficult experiences of COVID-19 lockdowns reduced the negative impacts of social comparisons. (Shutterstock)

A different effect depending on the social media

There are distinctions to be made depending on which social media platform a person is using. Researchers at the University of Lorraine, France, consider that social media platforms should not be all lumped together.

For example, the use of Facebook and Instagram is associated with lower well-being, while Twitter is associated with more positive emotions and higher life satisfaction. One possible explanation: Facebook and Instagram are known to be places for positive self-presentation, unlike Twitter, where it is more appropriate to share one's real opinions and emotions.

Trying to get social support on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic may reactivate negative emotions instead of releasing them, depending on which social media platform a person is using.

Many things motivate us to compare ourselves socially. Whether we like it or not, social media exposes us to more of those motivations. Depending on the type of content that is being shared, whether it is positive or negative, we tend to refer to it when we are self-evaluating. Sharing content that makes us feel good about ourselves and garners praise from others is nice, but you have to consider the effect of these posts on others.

Yet overall, I believe that sharing your difficulties in words, pictures or videos can still have positive effects and bring psychological benefits.

Source: [The Conversation](#)

Mindsets That Are Crucial To Improving Your Self-Confidence

Bettering one's self-esteem is no easy feat, but if you adhere to these ways of thinking, you might just see yourself in a more positive light.



Self-confidence is a major factor to being happy, but achieving it is no simple task. (Photo by Bekah Allmark from Unsplash)

It is no secret that many college students [lack self-confidence](#), and it does not help that there are a slew of factors that can contribute to this. If you, for example, had an unhappy childhood where your parents were overly critical and constantly scrutinized everything you did, you are more likely to experience low self-esteem. Other factors that can contribute to low self-esteem include poor academic performance and ongoing stressful life events, including the loss of a loved one, financial hardship, being treated poorly and ongoing mental and physical issues, such as chronic pain, anxiety or depression.

Low self-confidence has the potential to significantly lower your quality of life; thankfully, though, it does not have to. There are many things you can do to improve your self-esteem and, in turn, your life. However, to raise your self-esteem, you must be familiar with the ways in which it can

manifest itself. Low self-esteem can appear in the form of negative feelings that result from constant self-criticism. This can lead to debilitating feelings of sadness, anger, guilt or anxiety. Low self-confidence can also emerge from relationship problems, lack of self-care and self-harming behaviors, among other things. Once you are familiar with these signs and you are able to identify them, you will be on the right track to becoming more confident!

For individuals who have determined that they suffer from low self-confidence, I have put together a list of activities that can lessen your feelings of self-consciousness and doubt while simultaneously promoting self-love and acceptance.

1. Make Self-Love a Priority

If you want to raise your self-confidence, you will have to make self-love a top priority. By this, I mean you must put yourself first. I am not saying that you should act selfishly; just that you acknowledge your inalienable right to live a happy and healthy life. Self-love — as long as it does not become narcissism — is always a good thing. After all, you must learn to love yourself, flaws and all, before you can love someone else. Once you love and accept yourself for who you are, the right people will be naturally drawn to you.

To put yourself on the right track, I would start by listing all of the things that you like about yourself. These attributes can be physical, mental or both. It is also important that you include any personal accomplishments you are proud of, along with any goals you have achieved recently. Basically, you are listing anything and everything that makes you feel good about yourself.

After you have made that list, take a step back and fully consider all of your tremendous accomplishments — and be sure to remember that an accomplishment is an accomplishment, no matter how small. Once you can recognize all of your admirable qualities and give yourself a pat on the back for all of your achievements, your confidence levels will skyrocket.

2. Do Things That Make You Happy

This second tip is often overlooked. With our busy college schedules and countless homework assignments, it is hard to find enough free time to do what you want to do. I know that I have definitely felt this way, especially during finals week. When I do not allow myself enough “me” time, I end up feeling extra stressed out and overwhelmed.

Thus, whether it be painting, practicing a sport or anything else, I cannot stress the importance of fitting activities you enjoy into your schedule enough. You need to make sure that you are providing yourself with a

healthy amount of free time because if you do not, then you will end up feeling burnt out and demotivated.

Even if you have the busiest schedule in the world, you will strongly benefit from taking small breaks here and there. This will free your mind, which will then allow you to feel more happy and confident. You do not need to spend hours engaging in these activities. Even if you only choose to pursue one or two hobbies, if you set aside a handful of hours for them every week, you will still see a positive change. Your increased happiness will simultaneously lift your self-confidence.

3. Care Less About What Others Think of You

We have all heard the “care less about what others think of you” mantra before, but there is a reason why it has survived the test of time. It is a rule that is crucial to remember, especially for college students.

As a young adult navigating your way through the world, you have probably experienced feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness at some point in your college career. It is a natural human tendency to be overly concerned with how other people view you. Although being aware of yourself and your choices can be beneficial at times, it is more often detrimental.

If you **care too much** about how others see you, you will have difficulty finding happiness, and you will struggle to feel comfortable in your own skin. You can never be truly content with yourself if you are constantly worrying about what others think of you. At the end of the day, it is important to remember that you are much more than the way others perceive you. You must remember that in the end, what matters most is how you think of yourself.

Closing Thoughts

As a final point, it is important to keep the brevity of life in mind at all times. Life is too short to spend your precious moments worrying about others. You must live your life the way you want to live it because that is what will bring you the most happiness. Although it can be beneficial to receive feedback from others, you cannot forget that you are ultimately your own compass on the map that is your life.

BY DANIELA SAFFRAN, ROLLINS COLLEGE

Source: [Study Breaks](#)

6 of the Best Apps for People with Blindness or Visual Impairment

The market has seen some innovative and resourceful mobile applications that cater Blind and visually impaired people. We put together a list of our favourite 6 apps for people with blindness under the three most common mobile app categories!



Navigation Apps

Whether it is travelling or just going to the local supermarket, people with blindness have to often rely on others to guide them, and as such, navigation apps can be a game-changer in making them more independent and in control of their daily activities. Here are 2 apps that caught our eye:

- **BlindSquare**

BlindSquare is an accessible GPS app developed for people who are blind, deafblind, or have partial vision loss. The app has a self-voicing feature that allows users to travel safely and independently. Blindsquare operates by pairing with third-party navigation apps and has interesting features like alerting the user to places of interest close to their location.

- **Ariadne GPS**

Armed with an easy-to-use interface and a responsive self-voicing feature, Ariadne GPS is an intuitive navigation app for people with visual impairments. It allows users to know more about the area and the streets

around their location, helping them explore their surroundings with a simple drag gesture over their screen. In addition, to which, the app also has a special feature that announces upcoming stops on a bus or train, ensuring that you never miss your destination!

Visual Support Apps

We live in a world that is primarily visual – from billboards to the recipe behind the pack of your favourite noodles. Navigating such a world can be challenging for people who don't have their sight to guide them. Visual support apps can be lifechanging for such people, and we picked the 2 best apps that you should give a try:

- Envision AI

Accessing visual information has never been easier for blind and low vision users with Envision AI. It is an app that allows people to be more independent as they go about their daily activities by voicing visual information around them. The app has the ability to read texts in over 60 languages and assists users through text recognition. Whether you want to read the newspaper, instructions on a cereal box, or your family's handwritten notes – you can do it all with Envision AI!

- Be My Eyes

Sometimes, text recognition technology is not as accurate as we might like it to be. In these situations, Be My Eyes can be a saviour for people who might be looking for a little bit of help due to sight-related challenges. The app connects blind or visually impaired users to volunteers around the world in a matter of seconds. These volunteers help guide users through small, everyday tasks like reading the expiration on a packet of food or describing the colour and style of a pair of shoes. Available to users in over 180 languages, this form of virtual assistance not only helps create a sense of community but also helps spread awareness about blindness, low vision, and visual impairment.

Entertainment Apps

Loss of vision is a challenging experience, to say the least. Couple that with the inability to enjoy the things that you love like other sighted users.

Fortunately, with the evolution of technology, entertainment is becoming more accessible to all audiences and no longer has to be an isolating experience.

- Earcatch

The Earcatch app makes everyday experiences like watching a movie with the family possible for the blind audience. The app allows users to select the film they are going to watch in the cinema or at home and access the corresponding audio descriptions for the same through their smartphone or tablet. A movie night out with friends and family is no longer an impossibility.

- Travelear

A one-of-a-kind app for those with a travel bug, Travelear provides users with an immersive and vibrant audio experience. The app consists of a vast collection of varying soundscapes from all around the globe captured in 3D binaural audio. Users with blindness or visual impairment can transport themselves to another part of the world by simply putting their headphones on. The true-to-life soundscapes are a treat for anyone who loves to travel.

Source: [I am Hable](#)

Brain stretching and eye opening

By Archie Roberts

With the generous financial support from St Dunstan's I started studying part-time for a Masters of Management Degree: specialising in Monitoring and Evaluation through the University of the Witwatersrand in 2019.

I embarked on this journey with excitement but also with some trepidation knowing that I was going to face challenges in getting through the degree. I immersed myself in the world of systems thinking and complexity theory and, yes it was complicated, because my assignment had to be completed in Microsoft Excel and I struggle to use the software. I studied Governance and Social Policy and found out that a National Health System for South

Africa like they have in the United Kingdom was first proposed in South Africa during Jan Smut's time. I enjoyed my Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology courses with one proviso that being when it came to writing the exam for Quantitative Methods, my screen reader could not read the format they had used in the document and the paper had to be read to me by the invigilator. My other two set courses were monitoring, and Evaluation and my elective was Impact Evaluation. If you want to stretch your brain, there is a whole manual put out by the World Bank that is available online that tells you how to conduct Impact Evaluations using different methodologies.



Archie sitting on a rock with the ocean in the background

In 2020 for various reasons, I could not continue with my studies, but I registered again last year to develop my proposal and then defend my proposal to a panel. I still have to conduct my research this year and write it up.

Thinking about my journey thus far, when I studied previously my challenges to participating in education were around getting access to the information I needed to study. When I studied previously everything was read onto tape for me so it was with delight that when I started studying this time around that all my reading was available to me electronically and that I received it at the same time as my fellow students and could access it at the same time as they did. I could also go online and get additional

reading from the library. The major challenge studying this time round though is that I have had to get more tech-savvy which has been like doing an additional degree within a degree.

Studying for my Masters has stretched my brain and taken me to places I had never thought of going and I would like to thank St Dunstan's for financially supporting me in this eye-opening journey.

Read the blogpost [here](#).

Bionic eye tech aims to help blind people see



Existing bionic eye systems have a chip fitted to a person's retina, which connects wirelessly to a camera fitted to glasses

Once upon a time there were some unusual Australian sheep, with exceptionally sharp eyesight.

The small flock spent three months last year with bionic, artificial eyes, surgically implanted behind their retinas.

These sheep were part of a medical trial that aims to ultimately help people with some types of blindness to be able to see.

The specific aim of the sheep test was to see if the device in question, the Phoenix 99, caused any adverse physical reactions - the bionic eye was said to have been well tolerated by the animals. As a result, an application has now been made to start testing in human patients.

The project is being carried out by a team of researchers from the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales.

The Phoenix 99 is wirelessly linked to a small camera attached to a pair of glasses, it works by stimulating a user's retina. The retina is the layer of light-sensitive cells at the back of the eye that convert light into electrical messages, sent to the brain via the optic nerve, and processed into what we see.



A close up of the tiny Phoenix 99 system, which it is hoped will soon start human trials

The Phoenix 99 device is able to bypass faulty retina cells, and 'trigger' those that are still able to work.

"There were no unexpected reactions from the tissue around the device, and we expect it could remain in place for many years," says Samuel Eggenberger, a biomedical engineer at the the University of Sydney's School of Biomedical Engineering.

At least 2.2 billion people around the world suffer from some form of impaired vision, ranging from a mild level to total blindness, according to the World Health Organisation. The WHO says the financial impact of this, in terms of loss of productivity, is more than \$25bn (£19bn) per year for the global economy.

The use of bionic eye systems to help treat blindness is an industry still very much in its infancy, but with technological developments advancing quickly, one report expects the sector to be worth \$426m by 2028.

"Advancements in technology have been redefining ophthalmology," says Dr Diane Hilal-Campo, a New Jersey-based ophthalmologist. "Innovations have not only made diagnosis easier and more precise, but have transformed patient care for the better."

As an example, she points to a bionic eye that has already been fitted to more than 350 people around the world - Argus II from US firm, Second Sight.



Turkish woman Dilek Umran Ozturk got an Argus II implant in 2015, and it has enabled her to see the light form of people and shape for the first time

This works in the same way as the Phoenix 99, and the initial version was first fitted to a patient as far back as 2011.

Second Sight is now continuing work on a new product called Orion. This is a brain implant, and the company says that it has the goal that Orion will be able to treat nearly all forms of profound blindness. The project is still in early clinical phases.

Other bionic eyes systems include the Prima device, which has been developed by French firm Pixium Vision; and Bionic Eye System by another Australian team, Bionic Vision Technologies.



Dr Hilal-Campo says that the cost of bionic eyes need to come down substantially

"[Yet] I am optimistic, that in the coming years, biotech firms will continue to find new ways to help restore sight in those with vision loss."

Bhavin Shah, a London-based optometrist, agrees that bionic eyes still have a long way to go. He compares them with digital cameras, which were first invented in 1975, and then took decades before they were widely available.

"I believe that once the quality of the technology reaches a suitable standard, and approaches something approximating the vision achieved by a healthy eye, this technology will be much more commonplace," he says.

"However, there is still a strong drive to treat or prevent blindness from occurring in the first place."

Technologies that detect and diagnose vision impairments, he explains, are likely to have a much wider impact in the short-term. "There are [now] more advanced, easier to use, more reliable and inter-connected diagnostic tools," Mr Shah says.

"For example, we are able to quickly take multiple scans of different structures within the eye, examine them in greater resolution, and share

them quickly with colleagues. Artificial intelligence is also able to take decisions [on this], in some cases faster, and with greater reliability, than experienced clinicians."

Dr Karen Squier, an associate professor and chief of low-vision services at the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee, believes that some of the most important improvements in eyecare technology are often the smallest.



Dr Karen Squier says that we often forget the big advances in smartphone technology that have helped people with impaired vision

She points to things like the Apple iPhone's accessibility features. These include a voiceover function whereby the user can get audio descriptions of what is on the screen - from the battery percentage, to who is calling, and what app your finger is on.

Dr Squier also highlights Microsoft's Seeing AI app, which uses a smartphone's camera to identify people and objects, and describe them audibly. It can also check barcodes and then tell you what the item is, or read handwriting out loud, such as a letter from a grandchild.

"That's probably the technology that people get most excited about, because it does a lot of different things, and just uses the camera and operating software that is built into the phone already," adds Dr Squier "And it's usually pretty easy for people to learn how to use."



Numerous systems now allow smartphones to talk to a blind or visually impaired user

Longer-term, she believes some of the main benefits of eyecare technologies will come from integrating them into disability-friendly public policies and systems. One example could involve using technology that can alert vision-impaired passengers of bus timetables and alerting them when a bus is on its way, eliminating potential problems at the bus stop. That isn't to say that Dr Squier doesn't see more sophisticated technologies - bionic eyes included - having a significant impact in the future as technology advances.

"I think even bionic eyes are going in the right direction," she says. "But we'll have to see how it goes."

By Bernd Debusmann Jr
Business reporter

Source: [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com)

Media Man Mani



Manfred Ruiendo completed his N5 qualification in Film and Media at Revolution Media Academy. The goal for him is to start his own photography and videography studio.

Happy 18th Birthday

On behalf of everyone at St Dunstan's we hope you had a great 18th birthday celebration.

