

# **W** Are you a social media addict?

Social media has undeniably changed the way we relate to one another. But while we are more connected than ever, many people are supplementing face time with Facebook time. Some speculate that these mediated interactions are, in fact, causing us to disconnect relationally. Certainly it's vital to strike a balance when it comes to social media, and not let digital relationships override personal ones. Take the quiz below to find out if you're letting media rule your social life.

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Choose the answer that best applies.

1. How many Facebook friends do you have?
  - a) none, I have face to face friends
  - b) less than 300
  - c) more friends than I have in real life
2. Of the acronyms: LOL, ROTFLMAO, BRB, TTYL, BTW, you can decode
  - a) 0-2
  - b) 3-4
  - c) all five and I sometimes accidentally use them in speech as well
3. Your primary source of news is:
  - a) the newspaper or television
  - b) RSS news feeds
  - c) your friends' Facebook and Twitter updates
4. Your preferred method of keeping in touch with your friends overseas is
  - a) good old fashioned letters by mail
  - b) email
  - c) Twitter
5. A 'ping' is
  - a) the sound a microwave makes when popcorn is ready
  - b) a text or instant message
  - c) the sound I hear every five seconds, right before I check my friends' latest Tweets
6. Your closest friends
  - a) meet for coffee once a week
  - b) use Facebook to plan get-togethers and to stay in touch in the meantime
  - c) are ones you've only met online
7. How many people have you binged lately?
  - a) I have no idea what the question means
  - b) only me
  - c) all my Facebook friends and my crush in university
8. When you watch TV you typically
  - a) pass in and out of sleep on the couch
  - b) flip incessantly between channels
  - c) surf the internet and text message friends and family while flipping incessantly between channels
9. While on vacation you like to
  - a) unplug entirely
  - b) keep a phone handy for emergencies
  - c) document each meal and new friend on your camera phone for imminent Tweeting

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## Mostly As

You are so lacking in media savvy, you don't even know what Luddite means. Whether an intentional choice or just a product of your generation and lifestyle, you don't view computers and cell phones as an extension of yourself. You might find you function quite contentedly without social media, but don't write off these modern conveniences. They actually can be great tools for keeping in touch with loved ones, when used in moderation. For example, you can cut your long distance bills to nil by using online conferencing tools like Skype; and you don't have to wait for family reunions to watch nieces, nephews and grandchildren grow up if you view family members' Facebook photo albums.

## Mostly Bs

You've mastered social media, but it doesn't master you. You've struck a fine and difficult balance: you make use of social media's many benefits but you don't let it rule your social calendar. You might have to work hard to maintain this balance as your friends and acquaintances increasingly depend on social media to facilitate their relationships. Make a point of arranging face to face meetings with them, and if you find certain Facebook 'friends' just tempt you to waste time going through hundreds of photos of their new dog/house/shocking pregnancy photos, think about cutting your list of 'friends' down to the ones you truly want to invest in for the long term.

## Mostly Cs

You are a social media slave. Perhaps you are using social media as a form of personal validation, or as a way to supplement a lagging social life. There are better ways to connect with people—join a book club or sports team, attend a Bible study, or even set up a weekly brunch with your nearest and dearest. Resist the temptation to form an online support group for social media addicts and instead, try unplugging for extended portions of the day. Here's an experiment—Monitor your social media for a week. Add up the time and consider what else you might have accomplished in that time—like three hours of volunteering in your community, finishing that “incomplete” project, or just spending more time with your friends face-to-face. You might be surprised at how full your life suddenly becomes and how the temptation to digitally engage decreases.