



### *Coping with Social Media Addiction in Clinical Care*

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#### **Abstract**

*Social media addiction is a behavioral condition characterized by compulsive, excessive platform use that disrupts daily functioning, emotional well-being, and real-life relationships. Its development is influenced by psychological factors—such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and high neuroticism - alongside social pressures and platform designs that promote continuous engagement through reward-based algorithms. Evidence shows that coping with this addiction requires a multifaceted, personalized strategy. Cognitive behavioral therapy remains the most effective intervention, helping individuals identify triggers, restructure maladaptive thoughts, and build healthier digital habits. Mindfulness training also plays a key role by improving awareness of impulses and reducing emotionally driven checking behaviors. Additional therapeutic options include motivational therapy and spiritual practices like muraqabah, which support self-regulation and personal growth. Self-management strategies, such as limiting screen time, using blocking applications, and creating structured usage plans, complement formal therapy. Educational initiatives, supportive school environments, and family involvement further strengthen prevention and treatment by promoting healthy norms, supervision, and open communication. Lifestyle modifications - including prioritizing offline activities, establishing daily goals, and engaging in nature or exercise - help break compulsive patterns and restore balance. Among chronic patients, evidence indicates that mindfulness, digital health skills, and patient-centered online communication can reduce negative psychological impacts of social media use. However, research remains limited: a major systematic review found that only about half of existing interventions demonstrated clear benefits. Overall, the goal is not abstinence but controlled, intentional, and healthy engagement with social media through integrated behavioral, educational, and self-regulatory approaches.*

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## Abbreviation

**CBT:** Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

## Introduction

Coping with social media addiction requires a multifaceted approach combining behavioral interventions, psychological therapies, and self-management strategies.

The most robust evidence supports several key interventions: cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness training, and self-restrictive techniques [1]. Specifically, Ji et al. found therapeutic methods aim to change mental states and reduce addictive behaviors, with CBT and motivational therapy showing particular promise [2].

Key strategies include: using apps and self-control plans to limit software usage; implementing CBT to modify psychological patterns; practicing mindfulness to increase self-awareness; creating structured boundaries around social media use.

Importantly, Dumitrescu et al. emphasize that the goal isn't total abstinence, but controlled, responsible social media use. The effectiveness varies by individual, suggesting personalized approaches are crucial [3].

### **Based on the Research Sources Available, here is a Comprehensive Overview of How to Cope with Social Media Addiction:**

Understanding social media addiction: social media addiction is characterized as a behavioral addiction involving excessive and compulsive usage that affects daily functioning and overall well-being. It encompasses more than just spending excessive time online; it involves compulsively checking for updates, feeling anxious when offline, and suffering negative impacts on real-life relationships and responsibilities. The prevalence among teenagers ranges from 5% to 20%, with many spending an average of two to four hours per day on various social media platforms [1].

Chronic patients: social media addiction in chronic

patients can be effectively managed through mindfulness, patient-centered online communication, and strategic platform use.

The evidence suggests several key coping strategies: Sriwilai, Charoensukmongkol found that highly social media-addicted individuals tend to use emotion-focused coping, which actually increases emotional exhaustion [4]. In contrast, Lai et al. demonstrated that online patient-centered communication and improved eHealth literacy can help mitigate negative psychological effects [5].

Key recommendations include: develop digital health competencies; use patient-centered online communication platforms; practice mindfulness to reduce emotional reactivity, and limit health-related social media use.

While promising, the research is still emerging. Only 48% of studies in a systematic review Patel et al. showed definitive benefits, indicating a need for more comprehensive research on social media interventions for chronic patients [6].

Contributing factors: several interconnected factors contribute to social media addiction. Psychologically, low self-esteem and mental health issues like anxiety and depression drive excessive use, as social media offers a coping mechanism and validation [1]. Research shows that people with high neuroticism are particularly vulnerable, as they are more susceptible to adverse emotions and less able to regulate their emotions [2]. Socially, peer pressure and exposure to idealized online images exacerbate addiction by fostering negative self-comparisons and a desire for social acceptance [1].

From a technological perspective, social media platforms employ sophisticated engagement algorithms designed to maintain users' attention for extended periods. Features like infinite scrolling, personalized notifications, and variable reward systems create dopamine-driven feedback loops that encourage compulsive

checking and habitual interaction [1].

### **Comprehensive Treatment Approaches**

**Behavioral interventions:** the most robust evidence supports CBT as an effective intervention for social media addiction. CBT works by helping individuals identify and alter unhealthy thought patterns and behaviors associated with their online activities. By fostering more adaptive thinking, CBT enables people to recognize triggers for their social media use and develop healthier coping strategies [1]. Group CBT for adolescents has shown particular effectiveness, not only reducing internet use but also improving emotional state and self-regulation ability [2].

**Mindfulness training** represents another crucial intervention. Mindfulness practices encourage individuals to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the present moment. This heightened awareness helps people recognize when they are engaging in compulsive social media use and allows them to pause and reflect on their choices [1]. Research indicates that people's socially addictive behaviors and abilities to withstand social media pressure are significantly affected by their mindfulness levels [7].

**Self-intervention strategies:** self-intervention methods enable users to control their addictive behavior individually. Several applications (ColdTurkey, Self-Control, Freedom) can be used to block access to addictive sites. Additionally, productivity apps utilizing the Pomodoro technique install 25-minute work periods followed by 5-minute breaks, helping users maintain focus while allowing controlled social media access [2].

**Setting time limits** represents a practical strategy for managing excessive usage. Many social media platforms now offer integrated features that allow users to track and limit their daily usage, helping to instill more mindful consumption habits [1]. People can also establish self-restriction plans, such as placing phones in another room while working on academic tasks [2].

**Alternative therapeutic approaches:** motivational therapy has proven effective for behavioral addictions, using a semi-directive, client-centered approach

that explores and resolves internal ambivalence by developing differences between current and desired states. This approach aims to help individuals discover negative aspects of their social media use and increase opportunities for positive change [2].

For those seeking spiritual interventions, research has examined *muraqabah* (Islamic mindfulness or self-monitoring) as an alternative therapy. Daily practice of *muraqabah* has been proven to manage primary psychological aspects of humans and increase self-actualization, making it an effective alternative way to cope with social media addiction and prevent relapse behavior [8].

**Educational and environmental interventions:** Educational initiatives play a crucial role in combating social media addiction. Awareness campaigns that highlight potential negative effects like depression, anxiety, and decreased life satisfaction can boost resilience while encouraging more balanced interactions with social networking sites. These initiatives can include school presentations, workshops, and online resources that encourage teenagers to engage in conversations about their social media usage patterns [1].

**Creating supportive environments** is equally important. Studies have found that perceived positive school climate was negatively associated with internet addictive behaviors. Creating norms, policies, and climates that encourage positive social networking is suggested as a solution at institutional levels [2].

**Parental and family strategies:** effective interventions often involve active participation from parents and caregivers. Encouraging them to set boundaries and monitor teenagers' social media usage can significantly reduce addiction risks. By establishing guidelines for acceptable online behavior, parents can help teens develop healthier relationships with technology. This proactive approach creates opportunities for open discussions about potential dangers of excessive use and the importance of balance [1].

**Stress management and coping strategies:** research reveals that stress coping strategies play a mediating role between happiness and social media addiction. The findings show that strategies for coping with stress can effectively reduce individuals' social media

addiction [9]. However, people highly addicted to social media tend to use emotion-focused coping to deal with stress, which is subsequently associated with higher emotional exhaustion [4].

**Practical lifestyle changes:** beyond formal interventions, several practical lifestyle modifications can help overcome social media addiction. Setting priorities and spending more time with friends and families in person are fundamental approaches [10]. People can create daily goal lists in the morning, setting priorities and time allocations for each task, which helps prevent subconscious social media browsing [11].

**Engaging in alternative activities** is crucial for breaking addiction patterns. Reading books, studying, exercising, or spending time with family can fill the void left by reduced social media use. Getting outside to experience nature and engaging in physical activities helps balance the overuse of brain power typical in information society [11].

**Treatment goals and expectations:** it's important to understand that the goal of treatment for social media addiction differs from other addictions. Rather than total abstinence, the objective is controlled, responsible use of social networks. Relapse prevention should use strategies based on cognitive-behavioral therapies [3]. There is no clear evidence that one therapy is superior to others, and therapy selection should depend on individual circumstances [2].

**Addressing underlying issues:** successful treatment often requires addressing underlying psychological factors. People with high neuroticism, especially women, should pay special attention to their social media use and mental health status. Therapists working with highly neurotic clients should educate patients about negative effects of excessive social media use and encourage them to limit usage while seeking alternative offline social activities [2].

**Long-term management:** long-term success in managing social media addiction requires ongoing awareness and adjustment. As social media affects people differently depending on individual prerequisites and personality, personalized approaches are essential. Regular self-assessment, continued use of

management tools, and maintenance of healthy offline relationships and activities form the foundation of sustained recovery from social media addiction [11].

The multifaceted nature of social media addiction requires equally comprehensive treatment approaches. By combining behavioral interventions, educational initiatives, family involvement, and practical lifestyle changes, individuals can develop healthier relationships with social media while maintaining the benefits these platforms offer for communication and connection.

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### Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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