

## PSY 215 Module Two Milestone Template

To complete this milestone, review the Pew Research article “Social Media and the Cost of Caring,” linked in this assignment in your course. As you weigh the costs and benefits of frequent exposure to social media, respond to each of the rubric criteria with a minimum of 3 to 5 sentences. Support your position with credible sources when appropriate. Complete this template by replacing the bracketed text with the relevant information.

- According to the findings of the Pew Research study, there are several potential costs and benefits that result from frequent exposure to social media.
  - Describe one psychological **benefit** of frequent social media use.

Some psychological benefits of frequent social media use are having closer relationships with people and having more support. According to the Pew Research Center, a person who uses social media “...has more close friends; has more trust in people; feels more supported; and is more politically involved” (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 1). Some people do not believe that having close friends online is possible, but it is possible to have close friends in person and online. If a person wants to share about an event, positive or negative, to the people they are closest to, they can post about it online and/or tell the people face-to-face. By posting about a stressful event, it allows the person to receive support from their closest friends and family, some of which may live far away. Social media can also provide political awareness to people. People who are more aware of political topics can emotionally connect with others more easily and evaluate their own values and beliefs. Social media can offer people the benefits of close relationships, support, and political awareness.

- Describe one psychological **cost** of frequent social media use.

Using social media frequently can create some consequences such as increased stress and pressure. While social media makes people more aware of other people’s lives, not everything they view is positive. According to Pew Research Center, “Sometimes, a social media user’s awareness of events in others’ lives includes knowledge about *undesirable* events... Learning of such events in the life of a friend or family member can result in higher feelings of stress” (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 1). If someone learns about a negative event that occurred to someone they care about, whether online or in person, their own emotions will be impacted. People not only experience stress with social media when learning about negative events, but also when they try to sustain their social media status. The study from Pew Research Center concluded that, “Stress might come from maintaining a large network of Facebook friends, feeling jealous of their well-documented and well-appointed lives, the demands of replying to text messages... and the “fear of missing out” on activities...” (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 2). People can become so engaged in social media, that they forget the details of their own lives. Maintaining healthy relationships is important but maintaining every online relationship to the point of stress is unhealthy. People should not feel guilty about missing an online activity or not responding to a text immediately. People understand that others have lives outside of social media. While social media brings more awareness, it can cause people stress and to lose their perspective on life.

- At the end of the study overview on page 3, the researchers discuss the notion of stress being contagious.
  - Describe what the research **findings** tell us about the link between our awareness of other people's stressful life events on social media and increases in our own stress.

The research done by Pew Research Center concluded that, "Of the 12 stressful events... on average, women were aware of a larger number of events that had occurred among people they knew. On average, men were aware of 7% fewer stressful events among their closest social ties" (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 1). There is a direct relationship between awareness of stressful events on social media and our levels of stress. Considering the women from the study showed more awareness than men, they experienced significantly higher levels of stress than men (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 2). Since women are more aware of the stressful events of people they knew, it makes sense that they would experience an increase in their stress levels. "The "cost of caring" associated with awareness of other people's stressful events may be a negative consequence of social media use because social media may make users more aware of the struggles of those in their network" (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 3). The reason why being aware of others on social media can cause an increase in stress is because people care about others. If we see someone going through a difficult time, we feel empathy towards them, especially when we know the person. We can carry the burdens of others on our shoulders. The research findings tell us that being aware of other people's stressful life events on social media increases our stress levels.

- We often refer to our involvement in social media groups as being a member of a community.
  - Describe how social media can promote the levels of **education and awareness** that help to enhance well-being.

The amount of education a person has will affect the amount of awareness they have for the events happening to people they know. According to a Pew Research Study, "... both men and women, those who were younger and those with more years of education tended to know of more major events in the lives of people around them." (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 2). People who are aware of what other people around them are going through allows them to have more empathy. Social media can also educate people on social issues and provide them with learning opportunities. Social media usage can also lower stress levels for some. During a Pew Research Center study, they found that "... a woman who uses Twitter several times per day, sends or receives 25 emails per day, and shares two digital pictures through her mobile phone per day, scores 21% lower on our stress measure..." (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 2). Having and maintaining connections with people online can make someone feel cared for by others. Maintaining connections with people on social media also has other benefits. Pew Research center also found that "...social media users tend to perceive higher levels of social support in their networks. They also have a greater awareness of the resources within their network of relationships — on and offline" (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, et al., 2015, p. 2). People who have more support and resources are able to cope better and have fewer mental health issues. Social media usage can improve a person's well-being through education and awareness.

Despite the positive intent of some social media influencers, their messages don't always promote empathy, diversity, and inclusion.

- If you were a social media influencer, describe how you would use social media to enhance **compassion and empathy** for all people who struggle with psychological disorders.

If I were a social media influencer, I would use social media to promote mental health awareness and use positivity. I would share my story about my struggle with anxiety with others to let them know they are not alone when it comes to struggling with psychological disorders. I would provide others with self-care tips in order to help them heal and take care of themselves. I would remind them that it is not selfish to take time for themselves. I would create an open and safe place for others to talk about their struggles. I would make sure that the forum is filled with positivity and no judgements are made. In order to reach more people, I would do research on other mental disorders, making sure that I am fact checking my information and not posting myths or misleading information. Overall, I would try to be a role model for others and lead by example.



References:

Hampton, K., Rainie, L., Lu, W., Shin, I., & Purcell, K. (2015, January 15). *Social media and the cost of caring*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/01/15/social-media-and-stress/>.