

2a- Social media and dopamine

We know that engagement with social media and our cell phones releases a chemical called dopamine. That's why when you get a text - it feels good. In a 2012 study, Harvard research scientists reported that talking about oneself through social media activates a pleasure sensation in the brain usually associated with food, money and sex. It's why we count the likes, it's why we go back ten times to see if the interaction is growing, and if our Instagram is slowing we wonder if we have done something wrong, or if people don't like us anymore. The trauma for young kids to be unfriended is too much to handle. We know when you get the attention it feels good, you get a hit of dopamine which feels good which is why we keep going back to it. Dopamine is the exact same chemical that makes us feel good when we smoke, when we drink and when we gamble. In other words, it's highly, highly addictive...

We have age restrictions on smoking, drinking and gambling but we have no age restrictions on social media and cell phones. Which is the equivalent of opening up the liquor cabinet and saying to our teenagers "hey by the way, if this adolescence thing gets you down - help yourself."

An entire generation now has access to an addictive, numbing chemical called dopamine, through cellphones and social media, while they are going through the high stress of adolescence.(...)

These things balanced, are not bad. Alcohol is not bad, too much alcohol is bad. Gambling is fun, too much gambling is dangerous. There is nothing wrong with social media and cellphones, it's the imbalance.

(...)

Like all addiction, in time, it will destroy relationships, it will cost time, it will cost money, and it will make your life worse.

Simon Sinek, interview for Inside Quest, 2016