

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

There is a school of thought that social media is a negative force in our society. We are "friends" with those who agree with us and can become angry with (or "unfriend") those who disagree with us.



Add to that the perception that young people are on digital devices too much and aren't experiencing the benefits of a non-digital life that older generations did.

But before us baby boomers and Gen X-ers get too carried away on a wave of indignation by a younger generation, a new Pew Research Center survey has some good insights.

The center interviewed 743 teens, ages 13-17, about social media's impact and influence and it's not all bad.

Among the key findings were that 8 of 10 teens (81 percent) "say social media makes them feel more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives, while around two-thirds say these platforms make them feel as if they have people who will support them through tough times."

In addition, while teens acknowledge that social media can be a conduit for drama, more teens "associate their social media use with positive rather than negative emotions, such as feeling included rather than excluded (71 percent vs. 25 percent) or feeling confident rather than insecure (69 percent vs. 26 percent)."

In fact, teens may be better at knowing what to post on social media than the older generation. According to the survey, teens rarely post about political or religious beliefs. In addition, only 16 percent of teens say they regularly post selfies.

What teens reported liking about social media is the sense they have that it deepens their friendships.

"Fully 81 percent of teens say social media makes them feel more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives, with 37 percent saying it

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makes them feel 'a lot' more connected. Similarly, about 7 in 10 teens say these sites make them feel more in touch with their friends' feelings (69 percent), that they have people who will support them through tough times (68 percent), or that they have a place to show their creative side (71 percent).

The survey also found that teens have diverse friendships: being friends with people of a different race, ethnicity and gender.

"Today's teens are a part of the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in American history, and this reality is reflected in the fact that 6 in 10 teens report having a close friend who is of a different racial or ethnic background than they are. A similar share of teens (61 percent) identifies someone of a different gender as a close friend, and close to half (46 percent) say they have a close friend of a different religion."

Read the full report at www.pewinternet.org/2018/11/28/teens-social-media-habits-and-experiences/.

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