

# **THE** MODEL **HEALTH** **SHOW**

**EPISODE 584**

**The Shocking Connection  
Between Social Media, Obesity,  
& Depression**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. On this episode, we're going to be diving into a major health issue that needs a lot more attention before it's too late. Now this episode is going to function a little bit like an intervention for all of us, myself included. Right now, depending on which data set you look at, the average person is spending three to five hours each day on their smartphone. And the average person is checking their smartphone over 100 times a day, they can't keep their hands off of it. What I want you to understand is the foundational tenet for today, is that this behavior is something that's only been widely engaged by humans for a little over a decade. That's just the blink of an eye if we're talking about the scale of human evolution. This is something very, very new. And so, for our brains and our nervous system and our endocrine system, and just our cellular functional overall to adapt to this behavior, right now there's a lot of turbulence taking place. And we're going to dive into all the intersecting parts bio-mechanically and also cognitively with us being on our phone so much.

Now, what were we doing before that? That's the question. So again, we've been doing this behavior for a little over a decade now. What were you doing before that, do you even remember life before having access to a smartphone at all times? You've got to start to think about where is that time being extracted from because we still have the same 24 hours. We didn't get 25 or 26, we didn't get an additional hour added to our days, where is that three to five hours now invested in our phones... And by the way, that's the average person. There are people who were doing eight, there people who are doing 10, Well 14, then there are people who are flirting around an hour or two. But the bottom line is where are those hours coming from, what are we pulling away from? So just right off the bat, it's going to be extracting. This online social interaction is going to be taking and pulling away from our real-world social interactions, namely time with our families. So, a lot of people have been substituting or are pivoting away from time in the real world with their family to time online with other people. And it could be their family, even online. Also, time is being extracted from other social connections in the real world overall.

But also, another big thing that's been taken away, the hours have been pulled away from this activity and going into social media is reading. Not surprisingly, Gallup polls show that book reading is at an all-time low in 2021 versus the past 30 years. So, over the past 30 years, 2021 book reading has plummeted, it's hit its lowest point. Now, one of the sub-groups tracked who had the biggest decrease in the number of books read were college graduates. So, people who were learned, people who've gone through traditional education, graduating, their proclivity

to reading books afterwards just jump down more than any other sub-group that were tracked, what's going on there?

Now. Again, if you look at the age bracket of college graduates today have a much stronger proclivity to engaging with their smartphones and being on social media, alright, so more time is spent doing that stuff than reading books and continuing our education. And that's another thing too. I remember when I graduated, my wife when she graduated, she was like, "I'm never reading again." For her she was just doing the system, playing the game, playing the collegiate game, she graduated magna com laude, she had the tassels, the whole thing, the ribbons, but then she was like, "I'm not reading anymore, I'm done." Because of course, it's a stressful situation and you're getting this forced education, forced reading materials, and of course fortunately, she found over the upcoming years a new love for reading and myself included, but oftentimes we get burnt out by the actions that we're taking, and social media is one of the things that we tend to turn to for mindless entertainment and engagement. And we're going to talk about that more in the cognitive impact as we dissect this situation.

Also, another place that our time has been stolen from and invested in the social media and into our smartphones, another thing that time's been stolen from, is time creating, creating. We've become much more consumers than creators for the average person. So that time in creation... And this is one of the things that's innate within human beings, we are inherently creators. We come from a source of creation, and it's one of the things that is a cellular driving force. Our Bodies, our cells are always creating themselves, it's just a really deep thing to consider. But instead of participating in creation, we've pivoted into more consumption. Another place that time has been stolen from, is time in self-reflection. So serious thought about one's character, one's motives, one's actions, one's goals, one's results in our lives, taking time to just think. When is the last time you just thought? You just sat and thought? For a lot of us is just going to be like, "I don't really do that. I don't know the last time that I do... That I did something like that." So having the time to just be, to just think. Before the advent of smartphones, we had an abundance of this time and especially just technology period, television and computers and video games and all these things. Human spent a lot more time in contemplation and thinking about life and thinking about... Thinking about our thinking.

Addressing and considering our beliefs and social structures and... The list goes on and on and on. Our time and contemplation has been deeply lost, so now today, more than ever, I don't know if you've noticed this, there's a rampant regurgitation of the same stuff. Regurgitation of the same thoughts, it's not true thinking, it's more mentation, and again, a recycling, a regurgitation, manipulation of the same stuff that's here. We become a large parody act rather than true creators and true thinkers.

Also, another thing this time has been extracted from and invested in social media is movement and play, again things that were just second nature. We were outside, "Mom, bye, see you," walked out the front door and I'm gone, I'm just spending time out playing. We're just going out and kicking it in the neighborhood, playing sports, hanging out, doing literally adventures, going to the corner store, whatever it might be, we were just out and about, and we had the mandate, of course, being home before the streetlights come on.

But today, we have, more than ever, isolated ourselves indoors in our homes, where we can get an artificial escape through these devices where we're exploring and adventuring in other dimensions, but it's not real because we are physically there in this place but we're checking out, we're going into this device and we're leaving reality. We're leaving all the reality that's around us and going into this device. It's really, really, strange, but it's also cool, it's also cool, let's make this clear as well. This is not that this is all bad because it is also offered so much opportunity, so much opportunity for connection and for education and for growth and development. These exist as well, it's a both and or, it's not an either-or situation. So, this isn't an advocacy against social media and being on our smartphones and even having access to these things, but we have to come into this with more intention and more awareness, because as you'll see today, if we're not doing that, things can go off the deep end very quickly.

Another place that has been pulling from and extracting hours from for the average person today is pulling hours from our sleep, and that's leading to a series of detrimental outcomes as well. So, we're going to address all of these things on this episode today. Now the first major place that we want to look at is identifying what's become one of the biggest epidemics in our world today, which is the epidemic rates of depression, of anxiety, of other mental health conditions, ADHD, schizophrenia, the list goes on and on and on. Everything has sky-rocketed, we're talking about mental health, and specifically just addressing this relationship between social media use and depression.

There was a study that was published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that assessed over 5000 test subjects and found that overall, regular use of social media had a negative impact on an individual's well-being; just overall, social media has a negative impact on our well-being. Research published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology found that using social media less often than you normally would leads to significant decreases in both depression and loneliness. So, whatever your bar is right now in your use of social media, just using it a little less often leads to notable reductions in depression and loneliness. Go figure, again we're just scratching the surface, there are mountains of data on this stuff if anybody cares to look. This is again, the benefit of having access to this technology, because we can look at the stuff that matters, that's influencing our lives and our happiness and our success and our well-being, or we can just be a victim of it all.

Now the question would be, why would social media contribute so heavily to our epidemic levels of depression? Well that really boils down to the impact that it has on our brain, our nervous system, and our endocrine system. We have mood and behavior regulating hormones and neurotransmitters that we've developed over hundreds of thousands of years of evolution that are controlled by our social behavior. All right, so there's this inherent feedback loop that's taking place with the production of our hormones and neurotransmitters as guiding the communication between all the cells in our bodies. All of our organs and organ systems, and just our state of health, of awareness, of cognition, based on our social interactions, are influencing the production and interaction of all these things, and also this chemical cascade taking place in our body is influencing our social interactions and how we're showing up in our relationships; there's a deep, intimate connection here.

Now for instance, dopamine is a remarkable hormone that drives us to seek rewarding relationships and experiences. So, dopamine is a hallmark hormone that's been identified that is a driver towards reward, it's a real powerful motivating force. So, motivation, we experience motivation, but there's some biochemistry behind it, and dopamine is one of the chief hormones involved in our motivation, so it's driving us to seek connection, to seek experiences, to grow. Without dopamine humans wouldn't be humans, it's driven us as a species to continue to explore and to discover and to seek but also to connect.

Another hormone involved here, oxytocin, promotes bonding between people and it's released when you have close connections with others. Now, I can go on and on detailing all of the different hormones and neurotransmitters, we've got dozens of each, and hormones are really chemical messengers that are sending these metabolic DMs between your cells, to get everybody in the same communication loop. But what happens when things start going to spam? Or there's the wrong messaging that's taking place? The same thing with our neurotransmitters, we're looking more at our nervous system specifically, and our nervous system has a major role in associating with our environment, right? So, our nervous system is monitoring our internal and external environment and providing biochemical feedback so that we feel grounded and have an association of... An appropriate association with the world around us.

Very, very powerful stuff, but again, we could talk about all the various hormones and neurotransmitters involved, but most importantly, we want to identify the bottom line here, which is, there's a whole chemical cascade being set off within our bodies when interacting with people passively or intentionally or actively on social media. Again, there is a whole chemical cascade that's taking place in our bodies when we're interacting with people either actively or passively on social media, we cannot help it, it's how our bodies are hard-wired. All right, it's really based on our perception as we go into that multiverse found within our phones. Now think about the number of interactions that are possible on social media versus the

limited number of social interactions that we evolved having, smartphones have provided us with a virtually unlimited supply of social stimuli.

Alright, again, we evolved having a limited number of social interactions, but social media has provided us with an unlimited supply of social stimuli and biochemical soup that results from that, both positive and negative. Now, the sheer amount of access, the sheer amount of access that we have to these social interactions can drive depression due to the overwhelm of our nervous system that was never designed to handle it all. Again, we evolved having a limited number of social interactions, now, it's unlimited, as much as you want, it's a smorgasbord, it's a buffet of social interactions, you could just keep going and going and going. And there's no regulation except your self-regulation, unless for parents, for example, to be able to create structure around that, but even then, what happens when a person becomes an adult and they have to self-regulate themselves, when there's unlimited access to all of this social interaction that, as we're going to talk about today, can be a major driver of even these addictive behaviors. Now, let's look at one aspect of this, and it's the impact of "likes." Alright, the phenomenon of likes, now, you may think that likes are just a means of social interaction, an inert thing that just kind of guides connection and communication, but this is something that is designed by brilliant scientists, engineers, to have a specific impact on our psychology.

When you take a social action, this is in the real world, by the way, and also of course, it's heightened when we go online, when you take a social action and receive expected positive feedback, chemicals like dopamine are released to anchor in that behavior, right, that's how we're hard-wired. Now, when you receive even more positive feedback than expected, it makes you want to do more of it, alright. So, if you get more likes than you intended, more response, more connection, more love than you expected, man, that really does a number on dopamine and other hormones related to motivation, and it creates this really powerful feedback loop, even involving our opioid system as well. Now, here's the catch, when you don't receive that positive feedback that you expected, there is a gap that is now unfulfilled by positive motivating hormones leading to symptoms of a depressive state. Alright, again, when you take a social action and you don't receive the feedback that you expected, the positive feedback that you expected, there is a gap now, because that driver of motivation, the reward system didn't get the reward that was expected, so it's unfulfilled, and that in and of itself can create the symptoms of a depressive state.

Now, I'm saying the symptoms of a depressive state, because depression is not one thing, that's a huge problem in our culture today, is identifying depression as one thing, there are several different aspects or expressions of what that can be, and no two states of depression are same in any human beings, it's impossible, it's impossible. Because we're all unique, we all have a unique metabolic fingerprint, bio-chemical fingerprint that is completely, again, unique to us. No human being on planet Earth that has ever existed or ever will exist, has had the same exact

symptoms or state or expression of any diseases, it's all unique to us, and what we do is we have a category of symptoms and then we get placed with a label. We start to automate ourselves; we automate and label ourselves and create these standards of care based on those labels and it is wrong. It's not okay. And if you look at the outcomes, how is it working out for us treating people as the same? Everything is up, every single chronic disease you can name has been skyrocketing in recent decades, everything is getting worse with our level... On paper, our level of so-called sophistication and evolution and advancement, technological advancement, why then are we so sick? Here in the United States, 250 million of our citizens, we're approaching that number right now, are overweight or obese... How...

How? We know how this stuff works. How is that a thing? And we know that that state of obesity and overweight and right now, right about 42% of our citizens are clinically obese. Now, even within that, of course, we're talking about which measurement, which metrics is being used with BMI. For the most part, BMI is not an end all be all, by the way, but for the most part, those numbers are pretty accurate as far as the classification of obesity, because somebody can have an abnormal BMI and they can be a 5'10 NFL running back, who's 220 pounds. So based on BMI, this person will be categorized as obesity. We know that's not the case that we're talking about here, because the average person who's dipped into abnormal BMI numbers, body mass index numbers, is a result of our abnormal lifestyle here in the United States.

So, this is a state we're in, 60% of our citizens already have some degree of heart disease. What were once rare autoimmune diseases, now we have upwards of about 50 million Americans have autoimmune conditions. 130 million United States citizens have diabetes or pre-diabetes right now. This is not normal. Again, we're just talking, we're dancing into a little bit the state of mental health in the United States, and again, depression is at an all-time high, it's incredibly abnormal. It's scary, but what are we doing to address this problem? Has it been working? There are situations where people do experience a resolution or a management of those symptoms through conventional treatments, but for the most part, it's not working. It's not working.

People are not getting better. And we have to talk about these things. We have to be honest about the state of affairs. And a big part of that is because we're looking at people in these very cookie-cutter ways, and understanding our uniqueness, our biochemical uniqueness. None of us are the same. We can express a category of symptoms and we receive standard of care. We've got to do better.

Now, going back to our experience with social media and driving depression, when we don't receive the positive feedback that we expect from our social interaction, especially again, on social media, there is a gap that is now unfulfilled by positive motivating hormones leading to

symptoms of a depressive state, symptoms of a depressive state. Now, because of that, because you were inadequate in your social interaction, again, this is just the hard wiring of our brain, it's not really necessarily true, but because you were inadequate in your social media interaction, now your brain, your nervous system must rectify it or sit in that state of depressive symptoms because that gap has been created, it's unfulfilled. We will be driven to try to rectify. Now, what if we try to rectify it and it doesn't happen again, we still don't get the social feedback, we don't get the likes that we want, that gap widens and widens and widens, and the depressive state becomes stronger and stronger and stronger.

So, I hope that that makes sense. Now, likes are designed to psychologically influence your perceived importance. That's what they were designed to do. They're designed to influence your sense of self-value. These are brilliant engineers and scientists who are working day and night to make sure that you continue to use their product. That's the goal. That's the goal, because the more you use their product, the more likely you are to invest some money or to contribute to their overall value as an organization, because you are an active user. So, this is what they're designed to do. We think it's this friendly inert thing, but truly, it is a very strong, intentionally manipulated concoction that is influencing the psychology of billions of people at this point.

Now, another aspect of this is that humans, we inherently have a negativity bias. And this is not to say that we can't be positive and happy and loving and looking for the good in things, absolutely. But the way that our brains evolved was to specifically be on the lookout for danger because we evolved in very inflammatory or volatile conditions where even if it's other tribes or wild animals or whatever the case might be, the human brain is constantly scanning and looking for trouble on the horizon for survival. Really all animals have that tenet, but humans are interesting in that we can supersede that. We can choose to not have that be our modus operandi. We can choose to look for positivity more actively, more intentionally.

But we have to become aware that we can do that, because overall, we're going to be looking for negativity. And that behavior shows up in social media like none other, where we'll have a tendency just say, you post something that you created, you put your heart and soul into and let's say you get 50 wonderful comments that are affirmative and creating connection, but then there's this one comment where someone is not being affirmative, they're being negative, they're questioning your intentions, they're ranging from saying something malicious and nasty to even questioning your intellect or your humanity or whatever the case might be. And people could just say the wildest stuff to you online because they don't actually know you. They're not in association with you.

There's a barrier there of protection where through our evolution, if you were to challenge someone and to say some wild stuff to them, you have to be prepared to face the



consequences of what that could be. Whereas online, you can hide behind the keyboard, and no one really ever has to face any consequences of their malicious behavior. But because we have this negativity bias, we tend to take this stuff far more personally. And we can go into trying to sway that person's perspective about us or to argue with them, or to spew negativity back or whatever the case might be. And none of these things are wrong, by the way. This is not about right or wrong, this is about human behavior, and how we address things and how we handle things. And so that can spiral into feelings of depression because of that negativity bias. Forget the 50 good comments, that one comment is going to bother the hell out of you.

And this happens for so many people. Again, there's nothing wrong with us by having this happen, it's simply based on our negativity bias. So that's another way that social media can really get its hooks in someone and create that, and there are many stories, of course, of people facing negativity or backlash or whatever the case might be for something that they shared on social media, that leading to them even taking their life. It's happened more times than we can imagine at this point, and again, it's because of the value that we believe social media is reading back about ourselves. There's so much stock that gets invested in it because of the way cognitively, psychologically, that these platforms get their hooks in us.

Also, this phenomenon leads to a lack... There's a breadth of connection but very little depth of connection, there's a startling lack of depth in our personal connections online for the most part, for the most part, versus our real world relationships and interactions that we evolved with, so that can create this cognitive dissonance, this cognitive friction, where we are now psychologically concerned about the opinions of an incredibly abnormal amount of people that we don't even have a depth of connection with. We were not designed to care about what 1000 followers think or 10,000 followers or 100,000 followers. We're not designed for that, we have evolved with concern for our family or for our tribe at maximum, but to be faced with being concerned about the opinions of 10,000 followers is not anything that we are equipped to be able to handle. We can. We can evolve. Evolution takes time though.

Right now, we're getting a snapshot of how much of an impact this is having on us, and we have to talk about this, we have to get this out into the open so that we can start to do something about it and use the technology appropriately instead of it using us. So also, in the same domain of looking at depression and social media use, one of the underlying factors in that is the rampant increase in comparison, and being able to see the lives of other people and comparing ourselves to those people. Again, this is something that we might have comparison within our family unit, or again, within our tribe. Today, it's unlimited, unlimited how much we can compare ourselves to others with the psychological manipulation that most folks are simply not aware of.

They might have the idea or concept or be apparent or be available in their minds, but they don't really realize the fact that they're looking at people's highlights, they're looking at the best possible framing of their life, of their bodies, of their success, and comparing their lives where they are to that person's highlights and being that... And also, not just the highlights, but also a lot of fake sh\*t. Don't forget, there's so much fronting, there's so much fake or artificial things that are being propagated through these channels that it's created this massive distortion in how people see reality, and it's happening more so to our children.

And so, again, not being able to cognitively have that top of mind as you're looking at this, that this is this person's highlight and I'm comparing my life to their very best, we can start to create this again, this gap of depression, because we are not enough, we are not who they are, where they are, and so understanding that, this dramatic increase in comparison is one of the things that creates this suffering. And there's this wonderful quote that says, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Comparison is the thief of joy. A sure-fire way to create depression and a lack of self-value is comparing ourselves to others, there is, however, there's a healthy comparison, but that's more of a celebration and seeing the progress or growth or good in other people and saying, "You know what, I love that. I want to have that as well. I'm going to strive to take action so that I can be more like that."

But you have to work on yourself to be aware, especially in today's day and age, that that's an option, whereas today, we are oftentimes thrust into this domain where we have this negative comparison. Now also, in addition to these psychological inputs with depression and social media use and the use of our smartphones is also bio-mechanical contributions to depression because of our increased sedentary behavior. We can't leave that piece out. One of the biggest hallmarks that is seen in sedentary behavior is the rapid increase in depression and other mental health issues. So, our phones inherently are driving more sedentary behavior, so psychologically and biomechanically, these are some of the ingredients creating this soup, this gumbo, of disconnection and suffering when we're talking about depression and social media.

Now, the other thing that tends to come coupled with depression is anxiety, this is a very rudimentary statement to even say this because again, it's such a spectrum, but depression tends to be a conscious or unconscious focus on the past, and things that people have gone through, replaying scenarios, and feeling tones, experiences from the past, whereas anxiety tends to be a focus on future events, on things that are to come, on responsibilities, on things that are forward-facing. Now, again, this is a rudimentary statement, there's nothing that's black and white, but both of these scenarios, they can be intersecting, they can be imbued with each other, but that's an interesting way to consider these things, but when we're looking at anxiety, we can see that there's also this upward trend taking place with social media use and anxiety.

A study conducted by researchers at Texas State University titled Upward Social Comparisons and Posting Under the Influence: Investigating Social Media Behaviors of US Adults and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. And I looked at the multifaceted connection between anxiety and social media use. The researchers found that not only can social media use contribute to anxiety, individuals expressing anxiety while using social media had a greater likelihood of comparing themselves to others who are better off than they perceive themselves to be, they had increased behaviors of being bothered if they were unfriended/unfollowed by others, and they were far more likely to use alcohol while using social media. We got data on this stuff now, we've got data on this, but are people being educated about these things? You're damn sure not going to be educated more than likely, through the mediums themselves.

This isn't the stuff that gets a lot of attention, this isn't the stuff that gets that many likes. It's not going to be a TMZ vibe thing, where people are so concerned about a celebrity, what's happening with celebrities, it's not going to be a booty pick. That's not going to get as much love, the education side. And that's just the nature of things. Humans, especially today, we tend to be more obsessed with the lives of other people that we tend to think have some kind of superiority or importance, "celebrity", but humans, it's one of those things. But also there are other species who are interested in booties as well, just to throw that out there, but education through these mediums often is not getting the same attention and also even through "major media" as well, this education isn't coming along because they want you to continue to consume their information and to feel this is also the other part, and to feel disempowered, and to need them in order to sustain your sanity.

So, they want to create a disruption in your psychology, that makes you feel like you're insane if you're not continuously tapped into what they're selling. So, in addition to that, we've got data that is revealed, while many people who use social media a great deal are anxious, when they are not using social media, they turn to social media to reduce this withdrawal anxiety that comes from not using the social media, and end up with another form of anxiety produced by engaging with their digital platform just like double anxiety, triple anxiety, that's taking place, and it creates this vicious circle that we often don't realize we're getting caught up into. Now, the same here, there are psychological drivers of anxiety but there are also biomechanical drivers of anxiety as well, when engaging with our phone.

Staring, taking our focus attention and staring into that tiny space is connected, it's associated with mechanisms, that have evolved for humans to track if we're... Focusing our attention to very small, focused space, it's biomechanically connected to our focus on threats or opportunities. So, we evolve. If we have that state of focus for that long, we're tracking something, we're tracking a danger, we're tracking our food, which if we're not going to get that food we're going to die. So, this is associated with an increased activity of our sympathetic fight or flight nervous system. So, when we are staring at this tiny screen all that time, what

it's doing is continuously ramping up the activity of our fight or flight nervous system, it's just going up, ratcheting up and up, and before you know it, after you spend a significant time on social media, you get off and you just don't feel right.

It's very rare, if you think about it, have you been on the phone and digging around in the social media wormhole for 30 minutes, so 45 minutes or an hour? An hour plus and you get off and you're like, "I feel amazing. I feel great. That was awesome." It doesn't really happen. It doesn't really happen like that. And this is, again, looking at the biomechanical aspects of our phone use or social media use, and increasing levels of anxiety. Now, healthy social interaction is critical to our health and development, absolutely. And there's nothing wrong with having and creating relationships online, there's nothing wrong with that.

As long as you're also creating and maintaining healthy relationships in the real world, we are human, this is what we evolved doing, our DNA, our genes expect us to do that, this other thing is new, our genes are still trying to figure out how to even associate with this stuff and the expressions of what's happening genetically are leading to symptoms of disease overall. So, there's nothing wrong with having relationships through social media, as long as you're having relationships in the real world, like hanging out with friends and family, sharing a cup of coffee with someone, those types of behaviors, and also, by the way, just having a cup of coffee if we're going to do it, we got to do that, right. The Starbucks phenomenon, it's nuts, it is crazy what's happening out here on these streets, man, if you think about... Who do they think they are? Star f\*cked man.

They're doling out this really low-quality coffee, often riddled with pesticides and herbicides, rodenticides and mold... Toxic molds, not to mention all the artificial ingredients and sweeteners, and it's just crazy, the concoctions that people are getting through these outlets that are just raking it in, because it tastes good. Most of the people getting coffee don't really like coffee, they like all the other stuff added to the coffee that makes the coffee into something, so let's just be honest. Let's keep it 100. And that's okay, that's a way of being in the world, but let's upgrade this paradigm and raise our standards, because what's going to happen, those Starbucks, those mother Starbucks are going to eventually start to...

And you heard it here first, you're going to start to see no pesticides in our coffee, I'm telling you now, because the market is going to force that move to happen, no artificial ingredients, they're going to start to promote those things, it might not be next year, it might not be within the next five years, but eventually that's what they're going to be doing, just as you look at these food manufacturers from Kraft, to Heinz to, you name it, they're doing the same thing, so they're using this health washing lingo because they see what the market's doing all natural, what? What does that even mean, bro? Just to get you to engage with their product until you hold them accountable for their actions like, "Oh, this is all natural, then why is this still here,

or why was this grown with pesticides and herbicides and we're getting this through the thing that we're purchasing thinking that it's better."

So, with that being said, sitting down in the real world and having a couple of coffee with someone, even that practice can be rejuvenating cognitively and protective for our function and interaction, whether it's in the real world or on social media. Because that's what it's really about, is that our overall state of resilience as we do these things, a recent study published in the Journal Practical Neurology details how regularly drinking coffee has been shown to help prevent cognitive decline and reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease. Yeah, yes, but let's make it the good stuff, so I'm a huge advocate of upgrading, like let's get the best high quality coffee without pesticides and herbicides or rodenticides and have it infused with the very best medicinal mushrooms that have cognitive benefits as well, like lion's mane in a study published in biomedical research test subjects with a variety of health complaints, including anxiety, including anxiety and poor sleep quality, were given lion's mane or placebo, this is a placebo controlled trial for four weeks, the participants who used the lion's mane significantly reduced their levels of irritation and anxiety, versus the people who received the placebo just today, as in most every day, I brewed up a piping hot cup for my wife, myself, and also my mom-in-law is here of the Lion's Mane and Chaga infused organic coffee from Four Sigmatic, there's really nothing better out there, I highly encourage you to check them out, they have a wonderful variety, you can create your own, you can ground your own beans, or you can use their high quality grounds, or they have instant packs as well that I travel with, so I just got back from an event speaking in Mexico, and I took my packets with me, I was making Four Sigmatic in my hotel room. Alright, I'm about that life. I love this so much, and I love these guys, what the company is all about. And you also get a special 10% discount by going to [foursigmatic.com/model](http://foursigmatic.com/model), that's F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model, get 10% off. There are wonderful organic coffees that are infused with the most remarkable medicinal mushrooms, so again, in the real world, these behaviors sharing a cup of coffee, man, it was such a great experience this morning, just having... As soon as my mother-in-law came downstairs, I gave her a cup of coffee, saw the smile on her face is just such a vibe, just love it so much.

So, moving on, looking at these behaviors, yes, it's okay to create relationships online, as long as we're creating relationships in the real world, what our genes expect us to do, so leaning in a little bit more like, why do we tend to move away today? Move away from real world relationships and move online to these online relationships, these virtual relationships that again, we see these depressive symptoms, these mental health issues, and more we're going to talk about. What's the addictive behavior that's creating this situation? In his best-selling book, Irresistible, Associate Professor of Marketing at New York University Stern, School of Business, Adam Alter, past guest here on The Model Health Show. We'll put that episode for you in the show notes, he shares that we tend to think that a tendency towards addiction is a

character defect, but the data conclusively indicates that essentially all humans are susceptible to addiction.

One of the things the data reflects is that our environment is a huge determinant of our behavior which we know this already, but we tend to... Again, we push that away including detrimental or addictive behavior. Our environment is a huge influential factor on our activities, our behaviors, including those of the addictive nature. Now, social media is an environment, it's an environment, it's a virtual environment but it's an environment that the human brain is not well equipped to sustain itself in. The human brain is not well equipped to sustain itself in this virtual environment with again, unlimited access to social interactions, it's just infinite. We're not really wired up to be able to sustain that connection and so if you think about who's using who, we think that we're using social media but who's really using who? The problem isn't that humans lack willpower, is that there are thousands of other people on the other side of the screen whose job it is to break down any self-regulation that you have, that's their job.

Brilliant people on the other end, thousands, are there to break down your self-regulation and keep you on their platform as much as possible. If we look at, specifically right now, the people who are experiencing the worst ramifications of this are children. They're just growing up in this environment whereas a generation ago, we remember a time when we didn't have this stuff. But what's changing with kids' social interactions? Well, new data is now looking at the impact of using smartphones and other devices, the impact that this is having not just on children's mental health but also on their physical health, the outcomes of things like obesity. A study that was published by the CDC titled Effect of Media Use on Adolescent Body Weight found that increased use of screen devices like smartphones and tablets is associated with increases in risk of obesity through a variety of mechanisms including insufficient physical activity which we just talked about and increased calorie intake while using screen devices, we're talking about eating more. Our access to these devices has led to an increase in consumption coupled with our sedentary behavior. Man, this is a recipe to start to see how in the world did we get to 250 million, approaching 250 million US citizens being overweight or obese, you start to see the recipe here.

They also noted in this study that increased media use is associated with shorter and poorer sleep quality, which is also as they indicated, a significant risk factor for obesity. It's another check in the obesity category by disrupting sleep quality. And after school screen time was found to be associated with increased size of evening snack proportions and overall poor diet quality in adolescents. Again, stacking conditions against us, against our children because of these devices. Another study, this was cited in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health noted, "Children who use social media more are at greater risk of sleep disturbances that leads to obesity."

And also reported a 40% decrease in obesity in children whose parents limit their screen time versus children without such limitations. Another study, this was published in the Journal of Physical Therapy Science, examined test subjects over increasing amounts of time on their smartphone and stated, "The result of this study showed that prolonged use of smartphones could negatively affect both posture and respiratory function." Alright, so psychological impact and also biomechanical impact of us being on our smartphones, they talk about these phenomenon's of, "tech neck." Getting a tech neck being on our smartphones, we're down like this. Getting that development or abnormal development, we're going to end up walking around here on some Notre Dame vibes, Hunchback of Notre Dame. Alright?

And also, another one of these terms is Smartphone Slouching. We tend to become kyphotic, our shoulders come forward, head down. What is that posture? If you saw somebody who's not on their phone and their head is down and their body's slumped forward, what emotion is that person portraying? What state is that person portraying? Is it a state of happiness or is it a state of depression and sadness? Because our physical posture influences our emotions. Motion, the word motion is in that word. Our motion, our physical state influences our emotion, and our emotions influence our physical state. And so, we're creating these abnormal frames and muscle imbalances by being on our phones constantly. Again, the average person three to five hours a day on the phone, Bananas in Pajamas. But again, this is... I'm not free of this situation myself. We're not coming into this like... Again, this is an intervention for all of us. Part of the reason that I wanted to really address this is to add another layer cognitively for myself because if I'm going to show up and be the best version of myself, I've got to find other checks and balances because this stuff is not stopping any time soon with the prevalence in our lives. We have to have smart ways to implement these things in a way that leads to more health outcomes and less disease outcomes.

And so, we're going to jump into a couple of strategies here in just a moment. But one other spot that I wanted to address was this connection since that was mentioned in a previous study about the impact on our sleep quality. As you know, and we've talked about in several episodes of The Model Health Show, our sleep quality is a primary controller of our metabolic health. Our body weight, our body fat percentage, we got sound data on that, our immune system function, our cognitive ability is heavily influenced by our sleep quality. The list goes on and on and on.

So, what is the impact that these devices are having on our sleep. Well, research from Brigham and Women's Hospital in association with Harvard University suggests that the use of these light emitting electronic devices, tablets, smartphones, and of course, they threw the laptops in the mix here in the hours before bedtime can negatively impact overall health alertness and the circadian clock, which synchronizes the daily rhythm of sleep to external environmental

cues. So, the circadian clock within all of ourselves that are regulated by these clock genes and proteins that determine everything about us when certain hormones are being produced, digestion, our body temperature, the list goes on, everything about us is being influenced by the circadian clock, and it's getting thrown off by being on our devices late into the evening. During the two-week in-patient study, participants read on these light emitting devices.

So, for this one, they were using an iPad for several hours before bedtime each night for five consecutive nights, followed by the same regiment with printed books. Research has found that participants reading on that iPad took longer to fall asleep and spend less time in REM sleep, they also had reduction in secretion of melatonin, which is a primary regulator of that circadian clock, a hormone that normally rises in the evening and plays a major role in inducing sleepiness, and also had delayed circadian rhythms by more than an hour, and they were less sleepy before bedtime and sleepier and less alert the following morning. So again, we've got so much data accumulated on the impact that these devices, namely social media. So, we got these variety of apps, but folks are spending a tremendous amount of time today on social, social, social media, and it's having impact on our state of obesity, our mental health, our physical health, so just our functionality, our form and functionality, and also our sleep and the list goes on and on, the things that it is tied to. But what I wanted to dive into now was some tips and strategies for addressing this, I just pivoted with the scenario with our sleep.

Recent data shows that approximately 70% of Americans sleep with their phones in the bed or right there next to them, just within arm's reach, snuggled up close, and I know for some people, you're listening, you're like, "That's me. Yeah, I do, I do that." Alright, so just understand, it's kind of like an extension of us at this point, we were thinking, watching the movies, back in the day, I was watching Jean-Claude Van Damme, he always hit the split in the movies, it was mandatory, but there's one called cyborg. So, merging man and machine and having instant access to all this technology. In many ways, we already are. Our phones have become an extension of ourselves, many people experience anxiety when they're away from their phone or not knowing where their phone is, their life is mandated or controlled through that phone, and also that phone is then their portal to travel to different dimensions, to travel to certain information or connections or whatever the case might be, to interact, to share, to express. The list goes on and on, but this extension that we have, this technological extension, the only thing is it's not literally surgically implemented in our system, yet. Alright, so we need to address this before it's too late, right? Because there are already people who got their hand up like, Yeah, just connect me to the matrix, hook me up to my phone, man, I'm here for it.

And part of that is our a state of abnormal mental health, even thinking that that's a good idea, but we're already expressing these behaviors, So what are some strategies to have a better association with social media with our smartphones and to cultivate health and connection in our lives? In the real world. In a real way. In a sustainable way. Well, let's just first look at our



success and our mandate, the human tenet for creation and for impact, like these are psychological needs as well, a lot of our creation and our work is interrupted by our smartphones. And so, what I recommend and what I do, I'm not perfect about it, but the majority of the time, even preparing for this, I set aside time for undistracted, deep work, and I make sure that the phone is away from me. Alright, because the temptation, Temptation Island is there. Right there. If I could just reach and touch it. And you've been doing this for quite some time, there's this... You've built a lot of myelin to just check... Let me just check this right quick, let me just check my Instagram, let me just check that post, let me just check this tweet or Instagram or whatever it is, just check.

The next thing you know, you can get pulled into the matrix, you can get pulled into that medium so quickly before you know it, and then you're just like, What the... Where did the time go? Right, and so the data clearly indicates that when we jump into this just check, it's pulling us out of a workflow that takes several minutes to try to re-establish. Sometimes, oftentimes we're talking 30 minutes, 20, 30 minutes plus to get back into that state of being prepared for un-distracted deep work. Alright. So, with that said, consciously set aside time to execute because every time you check your phone, you're pulling yourself away from your effectiveness and your efficiency so that you could do whatever you want, you could spend time on the phone, but we're wasting so much time by going back and forth. So, what's one of those ways that we can do that? When you just want to be focused, keep your phone out of arms reach. This is not to say you're still not going to go and grab your phone, but now you've got time, there's time for you to... Your brain to be like, "Wait a minute, what are you doing?" So, for me, I keep my phone on my bookshelf, that's a few steps behind me in my office. I come in, Steve work time, set the phone down on our bookshelf, ringer off. And today, my wife can get access to me through my computer, if need be, but there's 99.99999% chance that nobody needs to get at me with anything urgent. Again, if we... Because we use that as an excuse like, "I got to keep my phone on incase..." Fill in the blank. This is new, what we're doing for decades past, people leave the house like when you just had a home phone and they're just gone, they're just gone. And they come back when they come back, or... It's just like there was a time when people didn't have 24/7 access to everyone at every time. And again, it's a new thing, not to say that it's bad, it's great to have more access if you need to get in touch with somebody, absolutely. But when that becomes a psychological trigger where I have to have my phone on at all times, because I need to know if there's a problem, that's a problem. Alright, so we've got to check ourselves cognitively and maybe create some checks and balances there, so that's another strategy.

Another thing is... This is super simple but very, very important, very powerful, is to free yourself from notifications and alerts, free yourself from the notifications and alerts from our phone. If you're getting notifications from Instagram and from YouTube and from Twitter and your text messages and your email, you're like Pavlov's dog, you're just responding to these

chimes. If it's not in connection with your work... So, you can even set up things with your phone now where work messages can come through, like my team we got slack, text message. Everything else for me is turned off, I don't have any notifications coming from Instagram though they keep asking. That's the thing, these apps, those engineers they're very good at like after the certain amount of cycles, we're going to ask them to, "Hey, make sure you turn on your notifications so you don't miss anything." No, thank you. So do yourself a favor and turn off the unnecessary notifications, because oftentimes what happens is when you're signing up for the app, they have you turn them on, and people just keep them on. There's another way to free ourselves from that constant distraction and getting pulled into that virtual world.

Another strategy is there are so many different tools, other apps that help to regulate our use of apps. The other day, I was messaging back and forth with a friend of mine, a country music superstar, Brett Eldredge, yes that's my homie, Brett Eldredge, again, people see me they're not going to be like "Shawn, you definitely about that country music." And you know to be honest, I dabble and dabble today, but I grew up with it thick with it heavy, because I have two sides of my family. Being bi-racial I've got my black experience and I've got my white experience. But what people don't understand is that I have the extremes of both, I think that's what makes me uniquely qualified to connect with so many people, is that my white side country is hell. I'm talking dirt road, I'm talking trailers. My grandmother and grandfather's best friends were Elma and Nettie. Elma and Nettie, and Elma had a son named Delma. Delma, lived in a trailer in the driveway of their house, they had an out-house. I didn't want to stay there, whenever we would stay at Elma and Nettie house, I got to go to that stank ass out-house, and then they had a pee bucket, you just got to take a number one, you don't got to go out in the middle of the night, you could use the bucket. Alright, this is true stories.

I learned how to ride a bike on the dirt road, going downhill, rocks. My grandfather is like, "You're going to learn or you're going to die." That was my life. All right, so I've a grandmother, I've a grandmother named Carol Sue, and then on the other side I've a grandmother named Ola Mae. All right so my black experience, so when the white experience, we got Crystal Gayle, we got Conway Twitty, we got Reba McEntire, we got The Judds. On the black side, we got NWA, Public Enemy, so we've got... And then of course, the cool fun vibes, the Luther Vandross, the Heavy D, all that. So, growing up in these completely different realities and the food was so different as well. Holidays, on the White side we got pumpkin pie, black side, sweet potato pie and neither of them are trying to mess with each other on those pies. So very different experiences and especially in the environments where one, we got hunting and fishing and a lot of nature. We got on the other side, a lot of the kind of concrete jungle phenomenon and a lot of people stacked on top of each other and projects, and a lot more access and rampant drug use, but that's changed also in other communities too, people were always finding a way

to get lit whether it's the country or the city. But on the countryside, it might be the moonshine barbs versus the other side.

But just being able to see these extremes and these are a part of me. And this is something I want to share with you is that when we're going through the things, we might not like it. I couldn't stand driving down to the country with my grandmother and listening to country music for three and a half hours, I'm just like, I want to listen to new edition like what... But then it's a part of me. I know these songs like the back of my hand. "Mama, he's crazy, Mama, he's crazy over me." The Judds, shout out to The Judds. So, it became a part of my make-up. And so, this is something that I appreciate and I love now. At the time, I didn't like it. And the other side, being at home with my mom and living in the inner city, I didn't like the fact that we didn't have much, that we were constantly struggling.

And... But now looking back, I have this perspective, and I know what it's like to not have. I know what it's like to make something out of nothing. But during our struggle periods, we tend to disregard or disrespect them. But ultimately, if we can look at the things we've been through and become at peace with them and to acknowledge their gift, it might have come wrapped up in some drama or some craziness or some struggle, that's when we start to become a whole reflection of who we really are. So, leaning back into this, Brett Eldredge, the only Brett Eldredge, we were going back and forth messaging through Instagram, we're just happening to use that platform. And suddenly, he hit me up on another thing, another app that I don't ever check. Well, I'm... Again, there are so many of these apps, man, but I didn't know that he hit me up there, and I didn't find out till two weeks later. He's like, "What happened to you, man?" Because Instagram shut him out because he has a timer on it.

And he was just finishing up that last bit of conversation because he put this check and balance in place for himself that he's only going to be on that platform for a certain amount of time. So, the message here is utilize technology to check your technology, and also, let's strive to put this stuff in a specific pocket. If you don't want to be somebody who's manipulated by social media, if it's not for your job, for example, in your work that you're on social media for three to five hours, if you're just like an hour a day, should be cool. That's appropriate for me. If that's the case, set that aside, schedule it. Put it on your calendar that from 1:00 to 2:00 PM, that's your social media time, or maybe 30 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening, rather than just being this free for all where you're constantly jumping and ducking in and out of the app all the time. Another tip here is to reclaim your time in general. Where are the spots when our phone tends to take advantage of us? Is it first thing in the morning? A lot of folks' report that their phone is their alarm clock. So, they pick it up, turn off the alarm, then they start digging around in their phone. Is that an appropriate behavior aligned with the person that you want to be?

If it is, so be it. If you're good with that, so be it. If you're healthy and successful and all that stuff, all good. But if you want to make a change and you see that this is starting your day in a disempowering place, or maybe you want to get a real alarm clock 'cause they still exist. And also, make that morning time, maybe it's just 30 minutes of phone free time to start your day so that you're not jumping at everybody else's stuff, their concerns, their problems, their creation, and you're able to focus on your own. So having some morning free phone time and also evening free phone time. So, before bed, we already know the ramifications of that. Maybe you set yourself a screen curfew in the evening, there's going to be a multitude of benefits there in doing that. So set aside, reclaim your time. What time is carved out for you? And the phone is not a part of it. So maybe in the morning, instead of jumping on to your phone and reading through stuff, maybe you pick up a physical book, personal development book, or a health book, or something for your spiritual well-being or whatever the case might be, and you start your day with that, or journaling, or just sitting, just having time to just be.

Again, when's the last time you did that, you just sat. You just sat? Maybe it's with a cup of tea or a cup of coffee, and contemplate, think. Get to know yourself again. Also, final tip here is socially distancing from our phone more often. This is an appropriate term for something like this. Strive to socially distance from your phone more often. Maybe this is dinner time. That's one of the mandates in our house, there's no phones at the dinner table, because the tendency is to pick that bad boy up. So don't even bring it. Family events. So maybe you've got some things going on, you leave the phone. Leave the phone in the car, or whatever the case is, you guys are doing stuff together. Also, within those family experiences, what tends to happen is parents might put together something and then the parents spend so much time doing social media or filming stuff or taking selfies that they're missing out on the beauty of the moment. This is not to say you can't take a picture or take a self, and that kind of stuff, but be aware that you're not checking out from the family thing that you created in order to show other people how awesome things are with your family. Be with your family.

And you can share things to reflect that but be congruent. Also, it could be, again, a game night, just keep your phone somewhere else. You got the people you love there, hang out with them. Do the game night. Let's socially distance from the phone. Same thing with, even if you guys are sitting around and watching a movie together, you know this, you've probably done it. I've done it rarely, but I've done it a couple of times where you're watching a movie or a show and you're on your phone. You're double screening. You're double diving, double-dipping into the multiple screens. I've seen phone, laptop, and TV. I've seen it. I've seen it. Also, just do more stuff without your phone. Go for a walk without your phone. Start to create. For some people, that have to feel uneasy, but start to socially distance from your phone intelligently, consciously, intentionally. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. This is a very important conversation to have. Make sure to share this out with your friends and family on social media.

Direct them to something that can provide a skill and some value so that we can start to use social media more appropriate. And of course, you can send this directly through the podcast app that you're listening on. This is not to villainize social media because it's a great opportunity and access that we have for growth and connection and empowerment. But we got to make sure that we are utilizing these tools and they're not using us. I appreciate you so much for tuning in to the show today. We've got some epic shows coming your way very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care. Have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

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