

LIFE WITHOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

I am 17 years old, and I don't have social media. I have never had, and I have survived.

What a convincing but shocking statement, isn't it? Is that possible in a world ruled by the need of posting everything and being aware of what each individual is doing? It is, although I should admit that going against the flow is not an easy task; in fact, it implies putting into practice your survival skills. If you have ever wondered what it is like to be anonymous, just keep reading.

No one would deny that the development of new technologies and the arising of social media have put people's lives upside down, changing not only the way they communicate, but also their lifestyle, in every single aspect; they have undoubtedly become our life partners. Were I able to write a 10-sheet-essay, I would name a wide variety of fields that have been influenced by this phenomenon, as well as the different ways in which they have been affected, mentioning both benefits and drawbacks; nevertheless, I am a teenager who has had to learn to keep herself out of the boom of social media, henceforth, I will just shed light on the impact on young people and my personal experience.

As far as teenagers are concerned, they are considered to be the most vulnerable and easily influenced segment of society. Therefore, it is not surprising that they are the ones that make the most exhaustive use of this kind of platforms and networks, spending hours glued to their smart devices, scrolling down a screen. Their lives have become window displays where there is no place for privacy but where fake perfection and reality distortion have the leading roles; indeed, it is worth mentioning that, nowadays, many teenagers' self-esteem is determined by the number of followers they have or the 'likes' that a picture has been given. Growing anxiety, increased feelings of depression, poor body image and loneliness, among others, are the consequences of being exposed to such large doses of idyll; seeing how great everyone is (or, at least, pretends to be) is nothing but damaging.

It should be noted that it is not until you get older that you learn how to draw the line between reality and façades, yet during teenage years it turns out to be a risk that could be avoided. Then, why are adolescents allowed to go into the lion's den? Why are not they prevented from gifting their privacy and anonymity?

It was a few years ago, when friends of mine started to join sites such as Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter and created their profiles, that I questioned myself what the point of all of that was. What sprung up to my mind was: 'Andrea, do you show your selfies or what you've had for breakfast to the first person you exchange glances with in the street?' My inner answer was: 'Of course not'.

Regardless of social media being a mass phenomenon, I decided to live my adolescence to the fullest, that is to say, not to worry whether or not was 9 pm the right time to post my best picture, and not to bear in mind if my snacks were 'instagrammeable'. I was focused on enjoying the little things, building my future and simply doing my best; there was no need to show others how I was doing that. Moreover, frankly speaking, I had no particular interest in seeing how anybody that didn't belong to my inner circle was doing it! Those I actually had a close relationship with would just make me part of the process.

The gist of the matter is that, as a consequence of that decision, I had to see myself being left apart, just due to the fact of not knowing which famous couple had just broken up or not having left a comment on someone's post. Isn't it illogical?

I was absolutely convinced that what I was doing was the right thing, but that implied losing many people. Conversely, I stood by my beliefs, and realised that my value as a person was not defined

by a nice Instagram profile or a quote posted on Twitter, let alone the number of people that knew who I was. I kept sharing worthy moments and experiences with my true friends, those that didn't mind not being able to tag me on their pics, and I was so relieved to know that my life was not subject to the power of social media.

While it is true that there are multiple advantages that clearly outweigh their disadvantages, I am committed to consolidating who I am without being in desperate need of sharing it. It is not that I do demonize social networking, in fact, I reckon they can be pretty useful, but I hold the opinion that if one wants to get to know me, real conversations are required.

Taking all the above into consideration, I am proud of being loyal to my beliefs and not sacrificing my mental well-being in order to do the same as everyone. My mum is the one who has educated me and instilled values in me, and I will be eternally grateful to her for having taught me that much, and that well.

I am 17 years old, I don't have social media. I have never had, I have survived, and I am so pleased with that.