The Art of Digital Zen
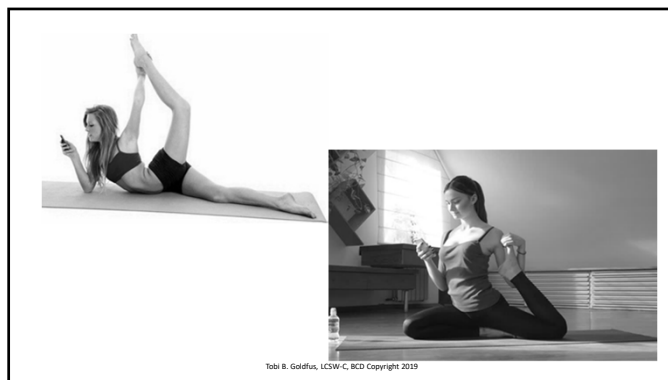
Balancing Social Media with Real Life:
Making Evocative Connections Come Alive

by Tobi B. Goldfus, LCSW-C, BCD

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How to "Walk" Digital Zen

- When you Digital Zen, don't think, have a Beginner's Mind. Each mindful pause, frees you from the past, from the future, from worries and fears. Breathe in and out!
- One step or text at a time, reach out and take their digital hand. (ideas from "How To Walk", Thich Nhat Hanh 2015)

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Digital Zen

Focused
Relaxed
Present
Joy in Being
Expressing our Nature
Being Ourselves
Breathing

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The Need for Social Connection

It's Evolutionary!

To watch and monitor, be seen and be monitored.

Helps explain hyper social media behavior.

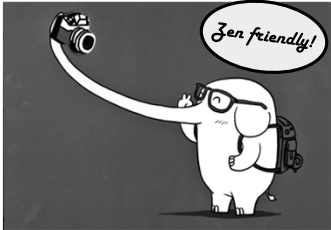(S. Weiss, McGill University, 2017)

Zen friendly!

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Inner Selfie: Immediate Down-Regulation

• Inner sense of self, "inner wisdom", "inner strength", unblemished self.
• Sacred part of self.
• Resiliency: healthy ego, strengths and resource states.

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Positive Influence of Social Media

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<u>MOST</u> young people find Social Media makes them happier and builds trust and social engagement.

(36 studies from 2012-2016)

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Social Media Strengths

- Support
- Validation
- Experimentation
- Self-expression
- Documentation
- Sharing

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Practicing Developmental Tasks Online (ages12-18)

Identity vs Role Confusion

- **Who** am I, and **Where** am I going?
- <u>Sexual Maturation</u>: The time to **experiment** & **explore**
- Forging **past** with **future** expectations
- **Loyalties** to groups & persons
- Fluid & complex **forces** often **at odds**   (Erick Erikson,1959)

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Developmental Stages of Adulthood
Digital Influence

- Intimacy vs. Isolation (18-40)
- Generativity vs. Stagnation (40-65)
- Ego Integrity vs. Despair (65+)

  (Erik Erikson, 1959)

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Practicing Ego States

Fear, Anger, Joy, Sadness, Disgust

Boredom, Anticipation, Serenity, Contented, Trust, Rage

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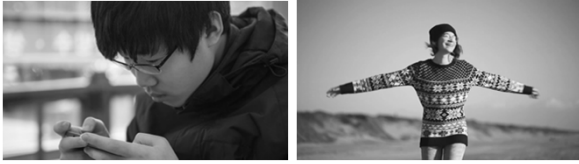## Social Media and Gaming Traps

TRAPPED

Never Zen!

Social Media Addiction

How is it addictive and what are the signs?

ADDICTED INTERNET?

ikydz

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Focused Attention:
The Many Shades of Dissociation

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The Bias Factor: Online Algorithms

Cognitive and Social Biases

Availability Bias

Extremity Bias

Confirmation Bias

Outrage with Virtue
Syndrome

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Neuroception

" Neural circuits distinguish whether situations or people are safe, dangerous, or life threatening… key element of trauma, the perception of threat, real or otherwise." (Stephen Porges, 2004)

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The Trauma Express: Instant

Online Disinhibition Effect
• Dissociative anonymity/invisibility.
• Lack of eye contact.
• Little social consequences.
• Sense of unidentifiability
  heightened if in group.

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(Computers in Human Behavior, 2012; Cyberspace & Behavior, 2004)

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The Trauma Express
Online Pain Starts from Anywhere

- Silent and shut down.
- Eroded sense of self.
- Stress hormones flood body.
- Non-specific physical complaints.
- Irrational (inhibited or explosive) behaviors.

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The Trauma Express
The Paradox of Online Sound

Online noise that triggers the pain avoided.
Can lead to high emotional and physical costs.

Can activate increased isolation, negative feedback
loops or retaliation.

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The Trauma Express
Sympathetic System Gone Wild

Flight: passive silence; scrolling, lurking, self-harming sites.

Fight: defending the wounded self; "flaming.

Freeze: immobilization, avoidance, shut-down.

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The Trauma Express
Technology's Gift: Online Sharing

- Healing begins when feeling listened to.
- Physiology begins to change.
- Limbic system flickers on: nudging ventral vagal system.

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Digital Distance:
the Goldilocks Effect

"not too close, not too far, just right".

(Alone Together, Turkle, 2015)

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Predicating Factors:
Previous Victimization

Negative experiences on Social Media can amplify.

More likely to be bullied, solicited and victimized, receive more negative feedback, experience difficulties regulating use, more passive viewing, lurking and scrolling.
(Odges, Univ. of CA, 2015)

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Predicating Factors

Rejection Sensitivity (RS): High in real or perceived situations.

Psychological legacy: high RS from family and social history, trauma and emotional pain in real life (IRL).

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Predicating Factors

Peer Influence: reinforces ideals and social pressure to conform.

Media Influence: internalizing ideals for happiness, body image (direct or indirect) as "normal".

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Predicating Factors

Lower economic levels: less parental engagement with digital use, more offline conflicts reported as well.

Sleep Deprivation: up late hours at night, over-active mind/hyperarousal/hypervigilance. Self-regulation compromised.

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Digital Addiction and "Phoneliness"

Increased time on SM associated with greater symptoms and odds of an anxiety disorder, and increased loneliness and depression.
(J. of Affective Disorders, 2017; Peper, et.al., Neuroscience, 2018)

Digital Addiction is a primary chronic disease of brain reward, motivation and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these lead to biological, psychological, social and spiritual dysfunction.
(APA & ASAM –American Society of Addiction Medicine)

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Time Spent on Social Media (TSSM)

"Behavioral smartphone addiction use begins using neurological connections in brains in ways similar to how opioid addiction is experienced by people taking oxycontin for pain relief gradually."   (Peper, 2018)

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Time Spent on Social Media (TSSM)

More than 4-5 hours a day on Social Media considered excessive and vulnerable to SM addiction. A distinct behavioral component, strongly and independently associated with depressive symptoms. (44% reported problematic SMU, Social Science Medicine, 2017)

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If my phone dies, I die.

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Multiple Platforms and Multitasking

• Multiple Social Media platforms: 7-11 or more problematic. Independently associated with anxiety and depression, even when TSSM is controlled. (Computers in Human Behavior, 2017)

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• Over users often multitask with other media; "semi-tasking". There is little time for minds to relax and regenerate.

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Social Exclusion on Social Media

• Rejection: direct negative attention suggesting one is not wanted, liked or disapproved of

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• Shaming: body size, looks and behaviors.

• Phubbing: ignoring someone in favor of smartphone, non-interest conveyed.

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Social Exclusion on Social Media

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- Ostracism: the experience of being ignored. Those more reliant on Social Media more sensitive to the effects of exclusion.
(Computers in Human Behavior, 2017)

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Social Exclusion on Social Media

- Ghosting: A coward's way out. Ceasing all communication while dating someone or by a friend or friend group, being dumped, no explanation.
  - Ghost: most likely handles other conflicts similarly. Can backfire.
  - Ghosted: builds up anxiety or dissociates with displaced behavioral or emotional symptoms.
  - Ghosting: right thing to do if in an abusive or unsafe relationship.

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Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying: causes extreme distress, can lead to self-injury and suicide.
- Cyberbullies: Anonymity and roles associated with aggressive posts. Consequences low.
- The Bullied: possible retaliation (i.e., mass shootings).

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Downside of Sexting

- Unwanted sexually revealing pics: "dick" and "tit" pics.
- Sexually explicit messages.
- 17% admitted to impulsively sharing and 35% to sharing with more than one in a nationwide survey.

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Trolling

The act of expressing hatred, racism, misogyny, or bickering back and forth - often anonymously.

1. To stay popular, getting positive feedback for doing it to someone.

2. To feel power, to fit into a society or back at a society that does not include them.

You're the worst!

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Lurking

- Those who observe, but do not participate. Large part of current online communities: to find out more.
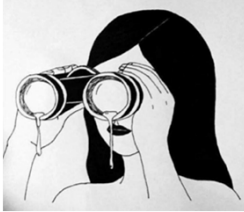
- Passive activity. Can be positive and informational but can eat away at self-esteem and confidence.

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Scrolling: "Compare and Despair"

Excessive scrolling found to contribute to anxiety and depression. Passive.

1. Down-comparing: comparing with "inferiors".

2. Up-comparing: comparing with those "better" than oneself.

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Online Social Mimicry and Communication

: Could you explain to me why you did that.

: I'll explian it later.

: Ok.

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Increasing Evocative Communication

"When you evoke emotion, there is a change in state".
Implicit responsiveness, like metaphors, create a new state.

(Zeig, 2019)

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Digital Mindfulness

1. **STOP** Put mobile device face down and unplug.
2. **BREATHE** 2 or 3 or even 4 times.
3. **CHECK** how you feel and give it a name (ex. "I feel hyper")
4. **WHAT** is the message and purpose of your post?
5. **ASK** yourself, "Is it helpful/true/kind/necessary?"; "What it's future impact?"
6. **POST POSITIVE!!**

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Social Media and 'Dock' Etiquette

- Check feeds when not IRL conversation.
- Put notifications on silent mode when with others.
- Be a SM "user friendly" positive presence.

- Put friends IRL over SM ones if they are present.
- Use eye contact and move phone from view.
- Enjoy intentional time off.

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OFF: Your Digital Detox for a Better Life

- Set your boundaries. Decide where screen time doesn't belong.
- Get an alarm clock. Sleep free zone.
- Phone-free food!
- Mute!
- Be present!

(OFF: Your Digital Detox for a Better Life; Tanya Goodin, 2017)

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Bringing Painful Online Experiences into Therapy for Healing

- Problem detection and assessment.
- Problem solving and intervention.
- Prevention building.

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Problem Detection and Assessment

- Social Media Assessment Form
- Social Media Disorder Scale
- Self reporting
- Informed interviewing and behavioral observation

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Somatic Experience

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FOCUSED ATTENTION
GROUNDING
BREATHE
BODY RESPONSE ASSESSMENT
LEARNING BODY LANGUAGE OF SELF

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Benefits of Inner Selfie Technique

- Strengthens and accesses positive resource strengths.
- Self-trance is down-regulating.
- Instant access to healthy ego states.
- Experiential evocative impact of stronger resource states, including somatic awareness.

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Benefits of Inner Selfie Technique

- Strengthens and accesses positive resource states.
- Self-trance of watching self is down-regulating.
- Healthy ego-strengths experienced instantly.
- Evocative experiential impact with stronger inner selfie.

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Inner Selfie Express Technique Using Mobile Devices

Using client's mobile device, make a 15-45 second video.

In role of coach and therapist, have your client look into the camera, breathe, then use a resource state to speak to their wounded online state. Rehearse first. Encourage tone, body language and gesture to increase access with inner selfie strengths.

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Ventral Vagal Inner Selfie
Practice Guide

Listen to and respect the body.

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Mobilize social interaction.

Keep in the reciprocity loop.

Eye-to-eye engagement, facial expressions, gestures, smiles, tones (safe, non-triggering and non-threatening)

Turn on the oxytocin!!

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Ventral Vagal Inner Selfie
Practice Guide

Zen friendly!

Relaxation Response

Restful Alertness (like yoga)

Massage

Acupuncture Recitations

Sunlight

Smiling

Laughter, Humor, Fun

Gratitude

Singing, Humming

Dancing

Chanting, Prayer, Spiritual

Sports

Wind Instruments

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Ventral Vagal Inner Selfie
Practice Guide

<u>Tapping Exercises</u>

Limbic warm-up (hugging, gentle tapping)

SWAT team intervention (rocking, humming, tapping, rating)

<u>Posture shifts</u>

"Step into Life" position

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Move fingers and hands

Deep breaths, emphasis on exhale

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Uhihuhqfhv

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