# GME Wellness Sub-Committee Newsbyte

## Regulating Social Media Use & Knowing When to Switch Off

Since the beginning of COVID and its subsequent waves, stressors at work seem to frequently extend themselves beyond the hospital. As physicians, it's almost impossible for us to escape the responsibility we hold during this time. This reflects greatly in our use of online spaces. Being someone who tries to be mindful of my social media use & limit it to perhaps one or two applications mainly, I have used it many a times as a tool to 'switch off' for the day even if it means randomly scrolling over instagram. That can work sometimes, however I also found it increasingly difficult to turn away from content that would not work in favor of my mental wellness. This mainly covers all the COVID heavy posts, particularly during this recurrent delta spike across the world. When you come home after spending a long day at ICU especially when your young COVID patient with no significant co-morbidities unexpectedly passes away, coming across online content that spotlights anti-vaxxers or failed policies or uprising economic challenges, etc., definitely does not help you to 'switch off'. On top of this the evolving global geopolitical situation, climate change, poverty are only few examples of a never-ending list, that is meant to drain you or be source of unhappiness.

Knowing that staying away from social media for good won't be a viable option for many, I would suggest we all have mechanisms to minimize its impact on mental health in a negative way. I would use my own example where I have created mental health checkpoints by doing a few things including:

- Limiting myself in terms of applications / platforms to use. I de-activated by Facebook in 2012 & have never had the need to re-activate it afterwards, switching to Instagram ever since.

- Being mainly an Instagram user, I have started following certain hashtags that would definitely bring me across content I find truly interesting, in my case those being posts about mountains and travel.

- Limiting my screen time to certain hours a week. Most phones these days have tools to monitor such screen activity.

- Sharing pictures, stories or live videos of content that I enjoy producing. Being a hobbyist photographer & fond of traveling I tend to share my journeys whenever I can mainly encourage positive discussions on my page around topics that uplift me such as nature, culture, food etc.

These are only a few personal examples of enabling some degree of mental checkpoints for sake of mental wellbeing. We can all fine tune its use in our own personalized ways. Beyond social media, wellness equates to having a passion for something that leaves you with no choice other than to take care of yourself. Just last week I found myself hiking 16 miles deep in the middle of Yosemite for the half dome summit & witnessing the perseids meteor shower the following night. Up there, I was alone with nothing but the sunlight shining through the trail, my thoughts clear as the air, jaw-dropping views across cliffs & vibrant shooting stars at night time. I had no choice but to let myself switch off. As long as you manage to take 'time-out' from routine stressors I would call that a healthy intervention. These can be simpler acts like taking a nap, reading your favorite book, meditation or more complex actions like a week-long vacation to your favorite national park, working on a piece of art or training for a triathlon. Only you know what works best for you. Please take care of yourself, because you only live once!

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