

By Kamryn Frontz
Social media's negative impact affects Havelock's well-being, view of self

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Staring into the bathroom mirror, **Haley Havelock**, 12, did not recognize herself. She saw the rumors that were spread about her. She saw the Instagram pages that were made to bring her down.

She saw depression.

As a little girl, Havelock struggled to shake the feeling that the universe hated her. Throughout elementary and middle school, she searched for a place to feel welcomed.

"I ended up going on these pages on Instagram because I felt really alone," Havelock said. "I would surround myself with constant negativity. Negative poems. Poems about the depressed girl. The thing is, when you put poetry out there, you're putting out your pain. There's a point when it gets too toxic. I would be having a great day and I would go on Instagram or Facebook and I would see an account about depression and I would completely shut down because it was like 'oh right, this is how I am supposed to feel; the universe hates me.'"

In the moment, Havelock thought the Instagram pages eased her pain, but looking back she could see that the accounts did the opposite.

"Depression puts a blinder on you of the people around you. When I was in my most depressed state, I didn't think that social media was negatively affecting me. I thought social media was just a place where I didn't feel alone."

Havelock said.

Although following the accounts had an overwhelmingly negative impact on her outlook on life, social media led Havelock to one of her long-distance best friends, **Jonah Semo**.

"I think that social media can be a good thing because you get to connect with people, like me and Haley meeting on the Internet, but it also negatively impacts people," Semo said.

Through the use of social media and phone calls, Semo and Havelock remained close for years. Semo watched the impact of social media on Havelock and on himself.

"Just like people have addictions, social media is an addiction. People can get addicted to swiping through their phone on a daily basis," Semo said. "I think it is sad that people will determine how they feel about themselves based on social media and how many followers they have."

While getting trapped in the addiction of social media, Havelock could not envision the way that it would alter her self image.

"I think that social media changed the way that I looked at myself in many ways. I think the specific cyber bullying that I

experienced, that made me feel like I was worthless. It made me completely change myself," Havelock said.

Prior to the bullying, Havelock had a peak of happiness in her life. She chose to live the way that she wanted to, regardless of other people.

"I came to Charleston in seventh grade with my own beliefs. I am a firm believer in being free-spirited. I was going through therapy at the time at MUSC. I was happy with myself and I just wanted to be free of my depression. I started wearing flower crowns to school. I started doing whatever I wanted. A particular girl had a problem with that," Havelock said.

Although Havelock intended to be herself regardless of other people, she was strongly impacted by teenagers around her through social media.

"She would make fake Instagrams about me. She would put me in group messages. She told me that I was 'too happy,'" Havelock said. "After that, I just had this idea in my head that I wasn't worth anybody liking me and I was too happy and maybe the universe really did not want me to be happy. It turned from

flower crowns to not showing up at school for a week. It changed a smiling me to me walking through the hallways and feeling completely numb."

Teffany Gallegos, 12, a close friend of Havelock's, witnessed the way that social media changes today's teenagers.

"I think that social media negatively impacts teenagers nowadays, more so girls, [because of] 'Instagram models' basically an unrealistic standard of what girls, mainly, are supposed to look like," Gallegos said. "I am guilty of it myself, I see a picture of a pretty girl and I think 'wow if only I worked out, I would have a body like hers,' or 'should get my lips done and maybe I'll look like her.' If I'm doing it, than of course other girls are doing it too and actually changing things about themselves to fit that unrealistic standard."

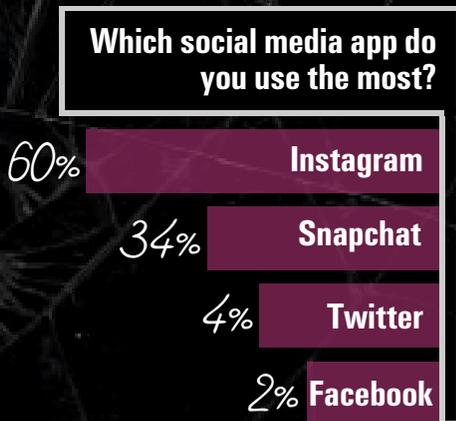
Havelock came to learn that social media can be controlled. Although it brought her years of pain, she grew to use it in a positive way to help others who may struggle as she did.

"I separated myself from social media," Havelock said. "I kind of use my social media now as an art form to kind of let people know to be whatever you want to be. I have shaped it to where I am in control. I control what I see. I control everything. There are still some days where I read a quote and I'll get back in that mindset. Someone may post something and it will set me off. I remind myself that I am not depression. I am not social media. I can overcome it and get past it."

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Students' Average Time on Their Phones

Fifty students were asked how much time they spent on their phones.



150 people polled
photographer a. collier, designer e. o'leary

2 hours & 27 minutes per day
27 hours & 40 minutes per week