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The Double-Edged Sword: Social Media's Impact on Teen Mental Health

Social media has become an integral part of teenage life, fundamentally altering how adolescents interact and perceive themselves. While these platforms offer unprecedented connectivity, they simultaneously present significant challenges to teenage mental wellbeing. I believe that social media has both positive and negative impacts on adolescent mental health, but the harmful effects often outweigh the benefits when usage is not properly monitored and regulated.

The negative consequences of excessive social media use are well-documented. Spending more than three hours daily on these platforms is correlated with increased anxiety and depression, as mentioned in the passage. This can be attributed to several factors. First, social media creates unrealistic standards through carefully curated content, leading to harmful social comparison. Teenagers constantly exposed to idealized images may develop negative body image and diminished self-esteem. Second, the addictive nature of these platforms, with their infinite scrolling and notification systems, can disrupt sleep patterns and reduce face-to-face interactions, both crucial for mental wellbeing.

However, dismissing social media entirely would overlook its potential benefits. For marginalized teenagers, online communities can provide essential support networks and a sense of belonging that might be unavailable in their immediate environment. These platforms can also serve as valuable resources for mental health information and awareness, potentially reducing stigma around seeking help.

The key lies in balanced usage and digital literacy. Parents and educators should help teenagers develop critical thinking skills to navigate social media responsibly. Setting reasonable time limits, encouraging offline activities, and maintaining open discussions about online experiences can mitigate negative impacts while preserving benefits.

In conclusion, social media's effect on teenage mental health is nuanced and context-dependent. While concerns about its harmful impacts are valid, efforts should focus on teaching healthy engagement rather than demonizing these platforms altogether. The goal should be empowering teenagers to use social media as a tool for connection and self-expression without compromising their mental wellbeing.