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Using Facebook to improve your mood and decrease anxiety

Is it possible you read that title thinking it must be miswritten? Facebook seems to do the opposite for a lot of people. With over a billion accounts, Facebook seems to be a part of most everyone's lives these days. Unfortunately, many find themselves feeling depressed or anxious about how others' lives look better and they are missing out. Or, there is so much that is negative in the world. Or, one ends up arguing in their heads wondering how someone could feel what has been expressed.

However, Facebook can be utilized as a very positive resource. One thing to remind yourself is -don't compare your life to the best moments of someone else's. Most likely, they are posting highlights. When you start feeling like your life doesn't measure up, this can be a good time to change your reaction. Remind yourself that everyone has blessings and challenges. Sure, it seems obvious but say it like a mantra as you flip through those posts- "everyone has blessings and challenges". It can help you see the big picture rather than thinking someone else's life is so perfect, or the world is so bad.

Another option to get more zen is doing the practice of mudita, or sympathetic joy. As you see the happy posts in your newsfeed, affirm "May your joy and happiness continue. May your good fortune grow". You can then choose to go further with "May my joy and happiness continue. May my good fortune grow" (while imagining a positive moment of your own). Then, "May our joy and happiness continue. May our good fortune grow". This is a great way to use the joy of others, to increase your own joy.

I find Facebook to be incredibly uplifting, though I know I'm probably not using it as designed. I have a separate account, in a fake name. That way no one can find me as this particular account is not one that will have friends. Instead, I 'like' the pages of the authors, spiritual leaders, and inspirational people that I find uplifting. They will generally post something each day. This gives me a Facebook feed full of one inspiring message after another. It's the perfect pick me up for something to read.

As we learn more and more about the effects of inflammation on the brain, it is important to figure out ways to decrease our reactivity in our daily life, in order to avoid promoting greater inflammation. I hope the above practices with Facebook, can be one step in decreasing that reactivity.