Anti-Social Media: How Our Obsession with Social Media Increases
Social Isolation and Undermines Well-Being

As humans, our need to belong is paramount and vital to our very existence. We are social animals. Those of us with strong social networks live longer and are happier. To be socially excluded, is to threaten one’s very existence. Our fear of social exclusion is equivalent to our fear of snakes, the dark, and heights.

Despite the importance of social relationships to our longevity and well-being, research suggests that both the quantity and quality of social relationships in industrialized societies has decreased. Surveys have found that an increasing number of Americans report having no confidant. In fact, this is now the modal response. Paradoxically, as the legions of social media users continues to increase, people increasingly report a sense of social isolation. It may be that the more time spent online, the less time available for face-to-face interactions. Being present for others is essential to fostering strong social bonds. Eye contact is an essential component of human connection.

My talk will address a series of in-progress research studies with co-author Meredith David that investigate the impact of phubbing (phone snubbing) on social media use and personal well-being. We argue that being phubbed by others leads to a sense of social exclusion that, paradoxically, sends people to social media (instead of face-to-face interactions) to regain a sense of inclusion. Increased social media use, however, has been linked to lower well-being.