

# How stress leads to Facebook addiction

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Friends on social media such as Facebook can be a great source of comfort during periods of stress. However, if they don't receive any support offline, stressed users are at risk of developing a pathological

dependence on the social networking site—the so-called Facebook addiction. This is the result of a study conducted by a team of the Mental Health Research and Treatment Center at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), headed by Dr. Julia Brailovskaia. The group has published its findings in the journal *Psychiatric Research* on 13 May 2019.

## **Students under stress**

For their study, the researchers evaluated the results from an [online survey](#) that had been taken by 309 Facebook users between the ages of 18 and 56. "We have specifically invited students to participate in the survey, as they often experience a high level of stress for a number of reasons," explains Julia Brailovskaia. Students are often put under pressure to succeed. Moreover, many leave their family home and the social network there; they have to run a household for the first time, are busy building new relationships.

The researchers' questions helped deduce the stress level, as well as how much social support the participants received offline and online. Moreover, the users were asked how much time they spend on Facebook daily and how they feel if they can't be online.

## **The higher the stress level, the deeper the engagement with Facebook**

"Our findings have shown that there is a positive relationship between the severity of daily [stress](#), the intensity of Facebook engagement, and the tendency to develop a pathological addiction to the [social networking](#) site," concludes Julia Brailovskaia. At the same time, this effect is reduced if users receive support by family and friends in real life. Individuals who don't experience much support offline are most at risk of developing a Facebook addiction.

## A vicious circle

Addiction symptoms include, for example: users spend more and more time on Facebook, are preoccupied with Facebook all the time and feel uneasy when they can't engage with the network online. The pathological behaviour, in turn, affects their life offline and may trap them in a vicious circle. "This aspect has to be taken into consideration when treating a person with a pathological addition—or suspected pathological addition—to Facebook," says the psychologist.

**More information:** Julia Brailovskaia et al, The relationship between daily stress, social support and Facebook Addiction Disorder, *Psychiatry Research* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.psychres.2019.05.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2019.05.014)

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