For me, social media became a part of my life around Year 7 and 8. I started off with Snapchat and Instagram before downloading Twitter and Facebook in Year 10. Thinking about the photos I posted at age 12 and 13 I wish I could go back and stop myself– I was very thankful for the "delete" button when I got older and looked back at my earlier (more cringey) posts! I think social media is such an amazing way to stay in touch with everything – friends, family, and local and global news and trends. However, there are some pretty huge dangers. Personally, I think one of the main things that I am aware of is how available my personal information is – sounds like common sense but there are so many sneaky pitfalls in social media sites that can lead to personal info getting out. Location settings that let you tag where you post from on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are great if I'm out at a great restaurant or event, but I wouldn't ever use them from home or even somewhere that I attend regularly, like school or my hockey club. Similarly, the new "Snapchat Maps" feature lets friends on Snapchat see where I am 24/7, right down to my home address – I turned that off ASAP! I also avoid other settings like entering my phone number into social media sites as I'd rather know who I give my phone number to, instead of having it available on my information section for example, on Facebook. Another important thing for me is knowing what my friends post of me on their own pages and being able to talk to them about what I don't want them to post. At the same time, we should listen to our friends when they say they don't want a photo of them posted – everyone wants a positive image of themselves online, on their own pages and their "Tagged In" page. Being aware of who can see my pages is also important, it's okay to have an account on the public setting as long as you know there's nothing that you wouldn't want a future university interviewer, employer or even just a family member to see! Also knowing that anyone can see your posts, so once again to be aware of what personal information is on show. However, I personally choose to keep the majority of my social media pages private, so I can keep track of exactly who's seeing them.

Social media addiction is something that most young people deal with and it may seem silly to someone who's never experienced any social media sites, but they can draw you in and people get easily hooked. For young people, its even more easy for us to get sucked in to constantly seeing what our friends are doing in their lives portrayed on social media, instead of focusing on our own life. We need to be able to put our phones down and do something else, which seems pretty hard sometimes! What helps for me is finding something I'm really into like a good book, watching a TV programme with my mum or even going to the gym to help get me away from being on my phone constantly. Looking back, I know I used to be on my phone a lot, particularly at home and I'm still learning new ways to just step back from it and do something else. Cyber bullying is – unfortunately – the part of social media that often ruins it for many people. Things that would never be said in real life get typed out behind the safety of a screen and cause so many young people real problems. It's important for people to be aware that their words have impact, and their positive image online can so easily be ruined with a real-life reputation of being a cyber bully. We are lucky to live in the social media age where our friends and support network are only a few keystrokes away – let's use this wisely and look after ourselves and others online.

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