JOURNAL 8

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**Top 5 Tips to Harness Social Networks and the Internet in a Positive Way**

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Social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and etc. are readily accessible through every platform nowadays due to the advancement of technology. We use our phones, computers and tablets to check Facebook, Instagram and Twitter during awkward silences and moments in our lives or even when we are just bored. As a teenager born in the '90s, I live with both the perspective of how these social networks and platforms have had both a positive and negative effect on my generation.

If you haven't read my last post, I discussed the negative mental and physical effects of social media. I believe that there is an urgent need to empower the young generation through effective use of social networking, or in general, social media. The Internet is an absolutely amazing resource, and here are my top five tips on how we can harness the power of the Internet, specifically social networks, in a positive way.

**1. Crowdfunding and Fundraising**
If you are part of or know an organization that is struggling to raise funds for an important cause, use crowdfunding websites, such as GoFundMe, IndieGoGo, Peerbackers and Kickstarter, and promote on social networks to raise funds! People are more generous than you think, and they are willing to donate their money even more so when it's for a good cause. A $5 bill here and there from family, friends and relatives can go farther than you think! I encourage you to try this method and see how much it can do. For my English teacher's memorial service, we had a goal of raising $1,500. However, with the help of generous donors from our community through GoFundMe and a separate bake sale event, we raised nearly $2,600!

**2. Post Uplifting, Meaningful Messages and Photos**
On Instagram, we see a lot of pictures of girls and boys with either new clothes, the newest food trend, cars or makeup... and if you haven't noticed, there is a pattern here. We're growing up in a culture that is dominated by the need for more materialistic goods and an instinct to share nearly everything we purchase to our social networks. This only reinforces a need to buy more and spend more, and whether we admit it or not, it is subconsciously ingrained into our minds. However, can we use this "trend" in a positive way? Yes. Some tips are to share pictures of amazing scenery and activities that reinforce ideas of spending time with those you love (taking a break from technology of course), empowerment, education and happiness through moments and experiences shared, rather than obtaining or buying this item or that.

For example, if you're at a community service event, take pictures with your friends and show your followers on Instagram & Facebook just how much fun you are having, and seeing that photo, they'll probably want to hop on this bandwagon of service as well! That's just a starter and there are endless options to harness social networking in a positive way.

**3. News and Knowledge**
Our generation now more than ever needs to be informed of current world events, news, politics and government. I understand... that watching an episode of *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* is more entertaining than scrolling through a news feed of stories in politics and international affairs that will make you angry within 5 minutes. Even if you do get inspired & become well informed, you might get frustrated when you read about all these issues that have no easy answers. I'm here to tell you that it is okay. Just being aware of issues, such as global warming, corporate manipulation, animal cruelty and mental health is already a great start. My favorite website to read is *PolicyMic*; it discusses all the pertinent issues that television and newspapers will not cover (due to corporate monopoly of our news media today). When we read about these issues, we'll be encouraged to share and make change. We are the future, and it starts today.

**4. Creative Inspiration**
Is there an upcoming anniversary with your boyfriend or a big school project that you want to be creative with? Well, Pinterest, YouTube, Tumblr and so many more sites may be the answer. I don't always use these websites, but whenever I do, I always feel so inspired to take the time and use the power of human hands to make really nice crafts and do these activities and DIY's that just make everything so much more meaningful and personal for whatever endeavor or project I'm doing. Whenever you're feeling a little down or you have some free time, I highly suggest taking that down time to make a DIY out of anything. By doing so, you're using these simple everyday tools, such as a Xacto knife or a plain T-shirt, and creating something beautiful out of it, and it really emphasizes to me, personally, the importance of taking time for yourself and being able to see the beauty in things that not everyone sees. In addition, the things you create may not look perfect or come out of a store, but you made it with your own hands, and just in that itself, it is beautiful. And so are you. Never compare yourself to a Photoshopped image from a magazine or a superficial societal ideal.

**5. Mental and Physical Change**
If you're having a difficult time or struggle in dealing with an issue in your life, there are plenty of websites, applications and forums that you can use to heal and recover. You can find spiritual groups, LGBTQ groups, fitness groups, vegan groups, literally groups about anything, and being able to find a community of individuals who are like-minded as you and share the same passions or interests as you that no one else you know might have, you will realize that with every opinion on every matter, you aren't alone and there are people to help you with whatever journey you need.

*Would like to know five more tips on how to effectively harness social networking in a positive way? Check in a few weeks to read the next five issues, or follow me on Twitter (@iammiribel).*

**What is your opinion of what the author has to say? How do you think you can have a positive impact with social media and internet personally? With what you’re learning with the radio station and other media platforms? Write a 5-7 sentence paragraph and submit.**