

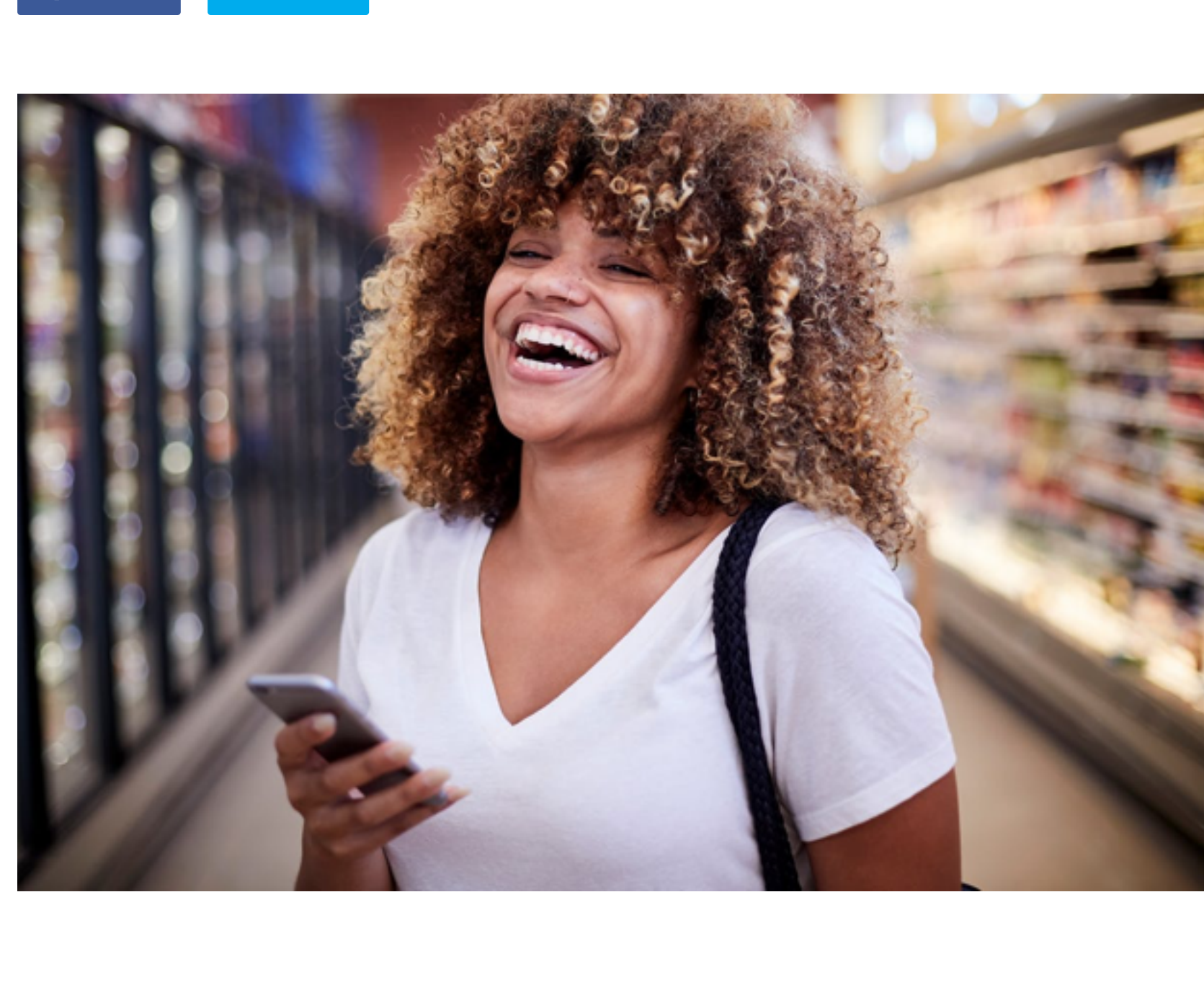
LIFE /

Why WhatsApp might actually be good for your mental health

Posted by Lauren Geall 2 years ago

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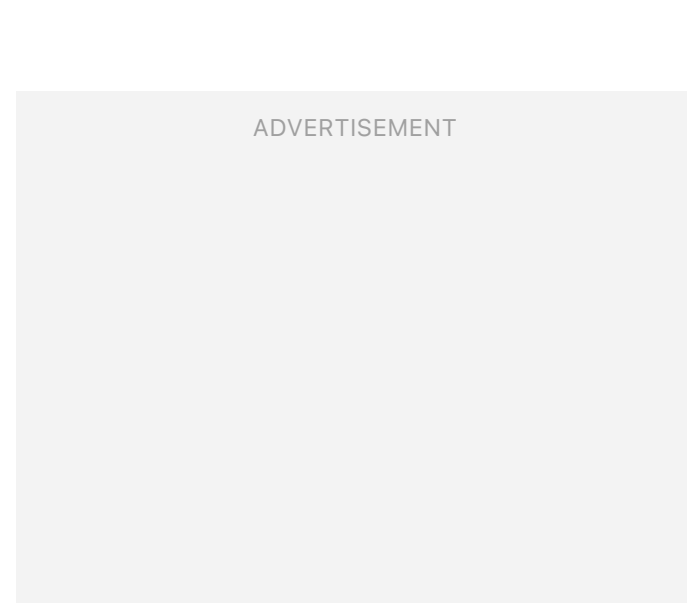
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A new study has revealed the popular messaging app may help us to fight feelings of loneliness and boost our self-esteem.

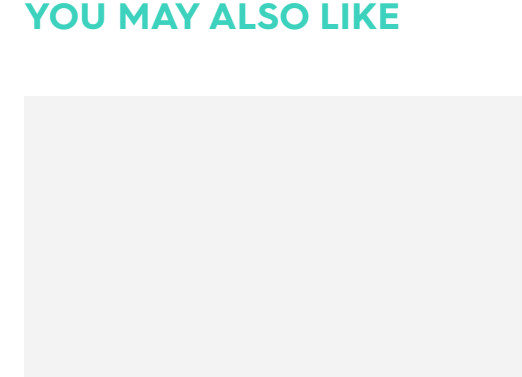
We've all heard about how social media can damage our mental health. From the dangers of too much screen time to the harm caused by comparing ourselves to others, social media can leave us feeling dejected, lonely and insecure.

However, social media's central purpose is to interact with others and build communities. And there are many other positives to be found, too, be it the particularly inspiring Instagram accounts or the Twitter threads which reaffirm our faith in humanity.



It makes sense, then, that scientists have confirmed that WhatsApp may actually be beneficial for our mental health.

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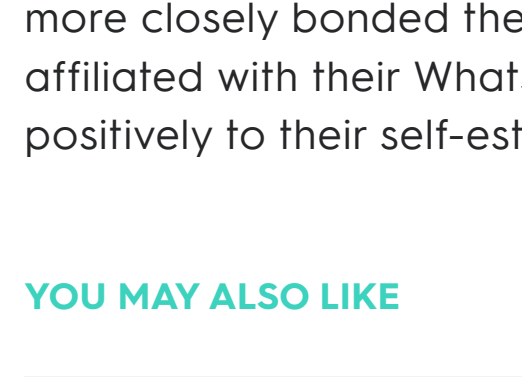
WhatsApp is down: "I lived without WhatsApp for 1 week - and this is what I learned"

A new study by researchers at Edge Hill University has revealed that interacting with your friends and family over WhatsApp can actually boost your self-esteem and help you to fight feelings of loneliness.

"There's lots of debate about whether spending time on social media is bad for our well-being but we've found it might not be as bad as we think," said Dr Linda Kaye, a senior lecturer in psychology at Edge Hill University.

"The more time people spent on WhatsApp, the more this related to them feeling close to their friends and family and they perceived these relationships to be good quality," she continued. "As well as this, the more closely bonded these friendships were and the more people felt affiliated with their WhatsApp groups, the more this was related positively to their self-esteem and social competence."

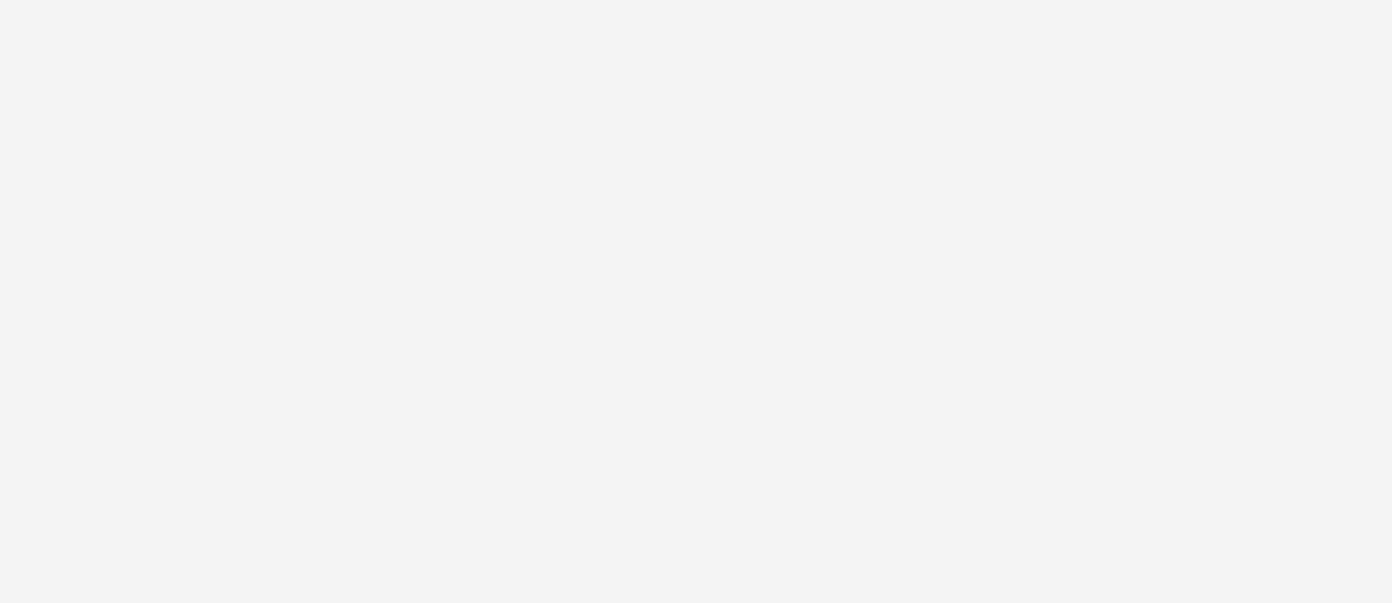
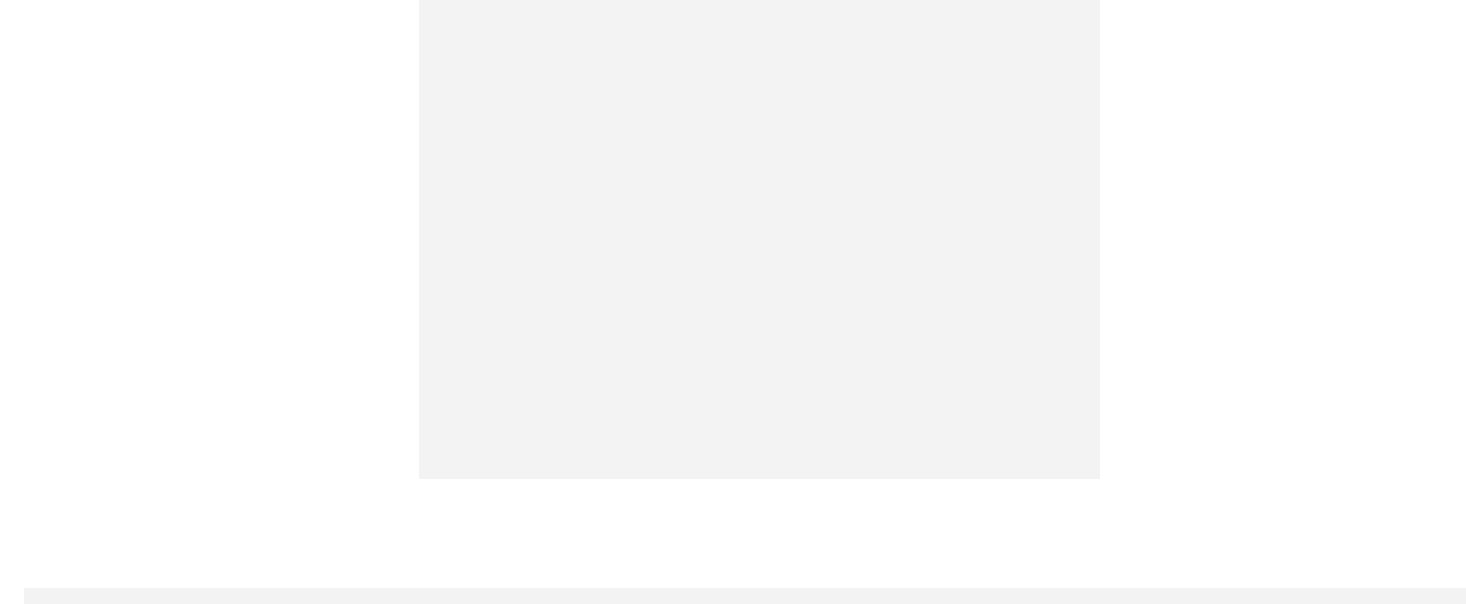
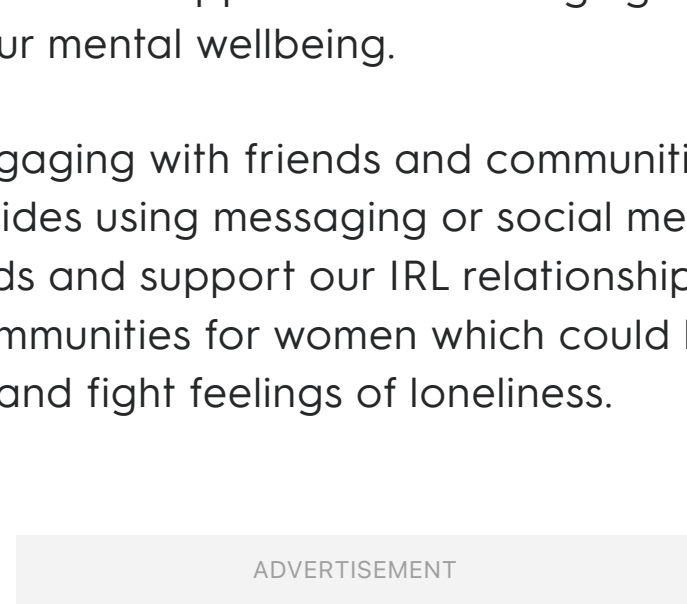
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Emotional Twitter thread reminds everyone of the good in social media

We all know that spending quality time with our friends and/or family can be extremely beneficial for us, so it's nice to know that getting some of that time through WhatsApp or other messaging services could also count and boost our mental well-being.

But what about engaging with friends and communities on other platforms too? Besides using messaging or social media apps to speak to family and friends and support our IRL relationships, there are some fantastic online communities for women which could help you to feel a part of something and fight feelings of loneliness.



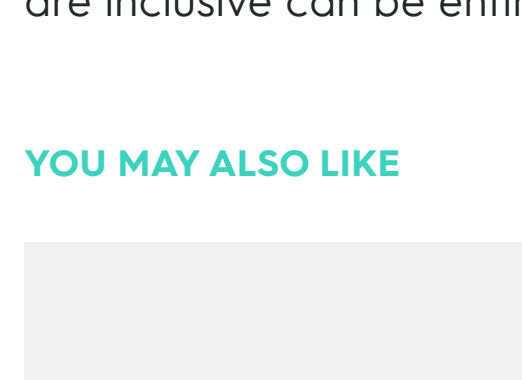
New research suggests we should swap full stops for exclamation marks on WhatsApp.

Speaking to *Stylist*, Dr Kaye explained how joining online communities on platforms such as Instagram or Facebook can also be beneficial for our mental health - it's all about the way we use them.

"My other research on gamer identity and the social aspects of digital games suggests that this affiliation is positively related to aspects of well-being such as high self-esteem and social competence, and reduced loneliness," she explained.

"I certainly see that online communities which hold positive values and are inclusive can be entirely beneficial for positive well-being"

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6 easy ways to make your social media feeds more joyful

Take @pinkprotes!, the feminist collective founded by writer and activist Scarlett Curtis. The group, who describe themselves as "a community of activists committed to engaging in action and supporting each other," regularly host real life events and organise protests for their members, creating a friendly, fun environment for women both online (via their Instagram) and offline.

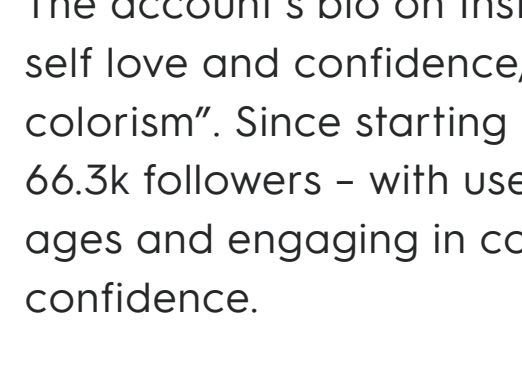


There's also @usdarkskins, a community started by Laureen Chalumeau. The account's bio on Instagram says it all: the community is "promoting self love and confidence, discouraging skin bleaching" and "combating colorism". Since starting the account, Chalumeau has attracted over 66.3k followers - with users celebrating black men and women of all ages and engaging in conversations about self care and body confidence.

Of course, there's no denying that social media has and will continue to have a negative impact on many people's mental health. But with more researchers dedicating their time to studying the potential benefits of social media too, we're going to be learning more and more about how to make our social media experiences more constructive and positive.

"There is a huge tendency for us to categorise social media as one unidimensional concept and to make the assumption that it's all bad," Dr Kaye pointed out.

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Scarlett Curtis banned these two words from her social media

"Social media in most ways is simply an extension of human social communication," she added, "and there is not necessarily a key theoretical reason why this would then be bad for our mental health."

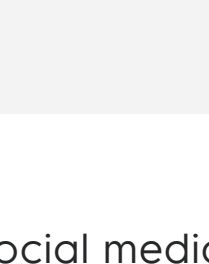
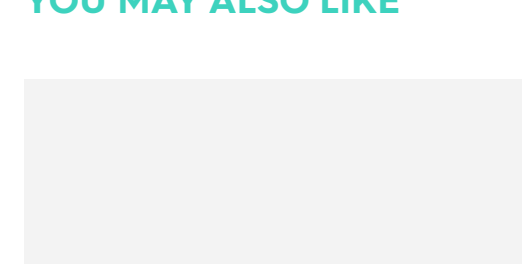
At the end of the day then, perhaps we are too quick to judge social media. To celebrate, too.

Images: Getty

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Lauren Geall As Stylist's digital writer, Lauren Geall writes on topics including mental health, wellbeing and work. She's also a big fan of houseplants and likes to dabble in film and TV from time-to-time.

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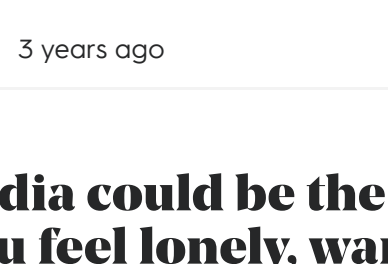
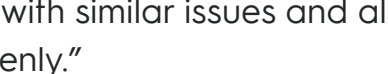
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