Intro: everyone is guiltily aware of how bad social media is

- Right now people talk a lot about a few things – how much toxic content they see online, the power of the people who control Big Tech and how evil they are (especially Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk), the weird things that their algorithm shows them, the ethics of AI generated content
- There are a lot of underlying societal problems being touched upon when these things are mentioned – namely, the techno-oligarchy steadily gaining power in the US and the negative effects of social media algorithms and AI-generated content on the individual.
- Everyone knows these are huge issues! But everyone somehow still stays online, supporting these social networks, feeding more data to The Algorithms, and giving personal information and money to tech oligarchs?!
- Listen, no judgment, I was on Instagram for 9 years of my life and I constantly think about how much time and mental energy I wasted on it alone
- But when there is something that so obviously is contributing to the downfall of democracy and society in the United States, why is anyone still on these platforms?

Why people still use this stuff

- People logically know these things, but they are still addicted to social media. I think this is to do with a few things: the illusion that they are improving their lives by staying on social media, and the normalisation of being addicted to social media
    - Firstly – a few key illusions.
        - Illusion #1: 'I am improving my social connections by staying on social media'. Ask yourself: is that truly the case? Am I staying connected with friends, or am I consuming personalised content and memes which I occasionally send to friends? Consider whether you are spending an amount of time on social media that could be spent on IRL or at least real-time, non-shallow online social interaction
        - Illusion #2: 'I am improving my knowledge by staying on social media'. Often comes in the form of 'look at all the breaking news and study/fitness/cooking hacks that I found on Instagram! Of course it's a useful platform!'. Ask yourself: is the information that I am consuming *accurate*? Is the information that I am consuming *practical*? Consider the truth that the news on social media platforms does not undergo the same vigorous fact-checking and journalistic integrity-checking process that is required for major news broadcasters such as the BBC. Consider how much you actually make use of the 'hacks' or recipes or etc. that you find on these platforms, or if it just goes into a folder on your phone and you don't end up using it.
    - Secondly – the normalisation of being addicted to social media
        - Social media keeps its power because of the vast numbers of daily users and the power of FOMO. Because all of our friends and family use it, we can get concerned that we are missing out on key social interactions by getting rid of it, which is somewhat fair since so many social relationships and interactions play out online these days.
        - We see other people who scroll Instagram Reels for an hour plus every day, reinforcing the idea that doing so is 'ok' or at least 'not that bad'.

        - *BUT THAT IS NOT NORMAL!* Truthfully, a lot of people got more addicted to social media during the pandemic because there were no other options for social interactions, and then addictive and enshittified platforms kept people ensnared once in-person interaction became possible again

Reinforcing the idea that quitting is possible and good

- So again, think about a few truths: social media is not an adequate replacement for necessary, life-enriching activities such as social interaction or practicing hobbies, yet it takes up time that could be used for doing so; the use of social media actively enriches people who are known to be bad people such as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg; social media is known to have contributed to the downfall of democracy in the United States such as during Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election; pandemic-era addiction to social media has been normalised despite alternative and healthier avenues of spending time now being possible again
- We can argue from this that the use of social media is not rational since people know it's bad but they still do it anyways, similar to the idea of addiction
- Also similar to the idea of addiction, we don't have to judge people who are using social media detrimentally, but we can acknowledge the fact that fighting the urges to use social media require both 'rational' and 'irrational' tactics
- If rational tactics (such as recognising the detrimental effects of social media) do not work, we need to try irrational tactics (such as provoking emotions)
- These algorithms and platforms live off provoked emotions to keep people online and consuming, so why can't we do the same thing?
- People need to be more ANGRY about what social media is doing to the world! The only way that I could get off social media was by being so angry at Mark Zuckerberg that I was too disgusted to give him more money
- Feed off your own disgust and anger. Let it motivate you to get off of these detrimental platforms
- Also become more aware of the way that social media is changing
    - People are seeing less and less of their actual friends online
    - Social media has become less and less social and you aren't even able to stay up to date with people in the same way that you used to
    - The thing people have always said is 'you don't see someone's real life on social media'. But when you don't even see content from the real people you know, you have completely ceased to be using social media and are now just consuming a more evil equivalent to traditional consumption such as television

What do you do instead?

- Stay in contact with friends through messaging/video calling platforms. Use them to have conversations and get real life updates
- Initially go cold turkey, then after a reasonable period of time (at least a month IMO) revisit the idea of social media and see if you're missing something that would actually be improving your life. Like YouTube tutorials or something
- Embrace the idea of turning your phone and social media back into tools that you control rather than sources of information that are chosen for you. Bring back control over what you do and consume.

- If you have to use social media, turn off the algorithms! Turn off your recommended page on Youtube, for instance, or curate custom feeds if your platform allows it
- Minimise the amount of data that a platform can collect on you – I don't allow YouTube to view my viewing history

Conclusion:

- Social media bad (obviously)
- But we all struggle to get rid of it due to illusory ideas about it benefiting our lives
- We can get rid of social media as much as possible, while turning our usage into a tool that benefits us by manually curating what we consume
- Yayyyy