

Emotions and Impact

By: Kate Ferenchick

A perfect life is possible. Gaining attention from hundreds, or thousands, of people. Entertainment that is attuned to your specific trait. Only having to be seen in the ideal light. Anything that one desires. All of this is easily attainable, and can produce so much dopamine, you become less sensitive to the hormone when it releases. Everyone can have access to this if they please. The only catch is: this is all online. Yet, it is just as real.

Reality has changed, but our feelings haven't. The boundary between what is real and what is artificial has not vanished, but rather has become irrelevant. We are able to achieve the same emotions both online and in person. For example, if an influencer one adores fails, one may produce the same emotions of devastation as if their friend fails. They may not truly know the influencer or have any REAL connection with them, but the feeling is real.

Hence, we want the genuine emotions people feel about us to be real as well, but only in a particular way. Humans do not want to be seen as vulnerable, unless they have reached the "status" to do so (such as influencers). This is the only benefit over online and social media emotions: we can control this more. We are able to curate how we are presented, what we like, and to an extent, how we react. This is not completely controlled, as we may impulsively text or have a bad response, but it is significantly more than real life. In real life we may mess up, have bad lighting and angles, and be seen when we are struggling.

This control changes our experiences and connections. We are able to remove the unpredictability we still hold in our lives and ensure we are only captured in chosen ways. In turn, it also pushes us to mimic this in our everyday reality with specific outfits, makeup, actions, and emotions (such as being nonchalant) that paint us in an ideal light. Returning this back to emotions, the aspect of being on social media forces us to reshape emotions. We still have genuine feelings and reactions, but much of the outward "aspect" of these are now in spaces we control; I may be upset over a post or comment, but am able to filter my emotions and dictate my responses.

This has benefits. We are able to control our negative emotions, outbursts, and bad moments online, and even transfer some of this to our lives when possible. On the contrary, it also limits our connections and joyful parts of life. In person, you can't hide "embarrassing" traits or moments, and that is what makes our connections so beautiful. We are all imperfect and chose to love and admire each other anyway. We may limit our happiness online in fear of how we are perceived and opt for a more neutral tone.

Human emotion both in person and online are just as real. We define our reality based on the impact it has to us, both good and bad. However, online we can now control our presence to be seen in a certain light, and may even start to seek this in personal connection. This curated version both may help and hurt us, especially based on how we adapt it. Reality is changed by social media, but emotions stay the same.