

101 WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO DO GOOD



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Introduction

Using social media to do good is something everyone can begin doing right now. It works on every social media platform. It works for personal use and for business. It is more of a philosophical approach to communication than a strategy, and it requires no specific age (other than that which is required by the platforms themselves) or gender or belief system. Everyone who engages on social media can use it for good.

This book identifies 101 very simple things that people can do, starting today. Some of the ideas mentioned may be more relatable by certain groups of people than by others, and other ideas are entirely universal. Before breaking down the ways one by one, I wanted to take the time to explore some overarching areas in our lives in which we can use social media for good.

Shifting Our Perspectives

Some of the most powerful ways we can use social media to do good focus entirely on our own internal beliefs and our approach to communication. We are taught from a very early age that our words have impact on others. We learn about the power of language to express love and support. We feel joy when we hear words that lift us up. We also feel the opposite impact when we experience words being used for manipulation or bullying or hate. We learn that sometimes different situations require different types of language and that some conversations are better if kept private. As we get older, we gain an understanding about how to choose our language based on situations. We may use different language in a work setting giving a tutorial to coworkers or at school giving a presentation than we would when chatting with friends over a campfire. The conversations we have and language we use in the bedroom most often stay there.

In each of these scenarios, whether at work or at home, in private or in public, we can show up fully, 100 percent authentically, and be ourselves. We simply choose which conversations to keep private, which can be public, and what type of language is appropriate for each situation. We also choose when to use no words at all, knowing that once we speak them we cannot take them back.

Somehow as social media has evolved, many of the lessons we have learned about how to engage in life have not entirely transferred to our use of social media.

We often don't keep those personal conversations private. We forget when to be quiet. We lose sight of the fact that engaging on social media is public, and sometimes we think we have to be someone other than who we are in order to be there.

None of this is true. To shift our use of social media in order to do good, we need to turn our attention inward and look at how we are showing up, what words we are using, and why we are there in the first place. Many of the ideas put forth in this book are aimed at supporting this personal journey.

Understanding the Power of Our Actions

Both offline and online, our actions have an impact. Every action we take results in something else. Although some of these results are microscopic and extremely difficult to see, they are still there, and their impacts grow over time.

Consider all the actions we can take when we engage on social media. We can like something, not like something, retweet something, comment on something, send messages, make connections, delete connections, join groups, post content, share reviews, and so much more.

Every action—every action—once done cannot be completely undone. Because of the nature of social media, once you take action, that action is out there for others to see. No matter how private you think your social media accounts are, no action taken on social media is private. You may delete something, but the impact of that initial action has already been felt by someone somewhere. No action on social media is small.

In order to do good on social media, we must understand how much power our actions truly have. Only then can we begin to consider what actions we want to take going forward.

Empowering Future Generations

Many children today seem to have been born with an iPad in their hands. Using technology to access online tools is second nature to them. Social media, however, is something that has to be taught. Sure, they can create an account and start posting pictures. They do not, however, know how to engage on social media responsibly. It is our responsibility (whether as parents, teachers, employers or other respected authority figures) to teach them.

Digital citizenship begins with knowledge and safety. From there it extends to many of the other concepts we are exploring in this book—how to use social media in a responsible way that will do good rather than harm to oneself or to others.

If we can empower our young people to have a solid understanding of social media and its power before or just as they become active engagers, we can empower an entire generation as ambassadors who use social media for good.