

[00:00:00] **Stephen Calabria:** From the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City, this is Road to Resilience, a podcast about facing adversity. I'm your host, Stephen Calabria, Mount Sinai's Director of Podcasting.

[00:00:12] On this episode, we welcome Maria Loizos, PhD. Dr. Loizos is a clinical neuropsychologist, Assistant Director of the Adult Neuropsychology Center and APA accredited adult psychology internship program, and an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

[00:00:31] Among other areas, Dr. Loizos specializes in the use and overuse of social media among her patients, with a particular interest in geriatric populations.

[00:00:41] The influx of social media and technology use, especially post COVID, illustrates how the problems with and potential solutions to social media overuse are only just starting to be understood.

[00:00:53] We're honored to welcome Dr. Maria Luizos to the show.

[00:00:56] Dr. Maria Loizos, welcome to Road to Resilience.

[00:01:00] **Maria Loizos:** Hi, thanks for having me.

[00:01:01] **Stephen Calabria:** Could you give us an overview of your background?

[00:01:04] **Maria Loizos:** I'm a clinical neuropsychologist. I assess older adult patients for cognitive decline and dementia.

[00:01:10] And I'm also a researcher with the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and so a lot of my research focuses on older adult technology use, how they use it, how often they use it and kind of how that can affect our patients, both cognitively but emotionally as well.

[00:01:25] **Stephen Calabria:** So you have an expertise in the effects of social media use, especially, and overuse. Could you give an overview of how excessive social media use affects mental and physical health across different age groups, not just geriatrics?

[00:01:39] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, so, COVID, the pandemic, really kind of amplified for us the dangers of isolation and how that can really affect anyone's mental health, not necessarily older adults, but kind of across age ranges.

[00:01:51] And what we've noticed is kind of this isolation, although it was helpful for keeping us safe, it also kind of hurt a lot of people.

[00:01:58] And a way for people to find connection and to, you know, be involved with people and feel like they weren't so isolated was to utilize social media. And so we're seeing really kind of the increase in social media use across the board.

[00:02:12] And with that, once everyone starts using it, we kind of become aware of the problems that can arise when you start to use it too often.

[00:02:20] **Stephen Calabria:** It seems pretty subjective, though, the idea of too often. Are there standards as to what constitutes overuse of social media? And does it vary by platform? Is six hours spent on Instagram, for example, the same as six hours spent on Facebook?

[00:02:34] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, it definitely depends on the person, I think, even more than just the platform or kind of what they do with it, as with all things. Even if it's good for you, quote, good for you, balance is important.

[00:02:46] So, if you're using social media and you're on Instagram or you're on Facebook and you're using it in a way to connect with people, see what friends from long ago are doing or people that you're close with, what are they up to, the grandkids, the friends, that could be great.

[00:02:59] But when you don't balance that with real world interaction and kind of getting out of that computer screen or that iPad screen. That's really where we start to see the issues. People are going to vary person to person.

[00:03:13] So, you know, someone spending half an hour a day on social media, that might be just fine for them. And depending on someone's job or depending on what they do for fun, that may vary and it may increase to the next person and that might be fine as well.

[00:03:26] Everyone kind of has a predisposition to feeling not great about yourself. And so, I think a lot of it is checking in with yourself and kind of assessing, is this too much?

[00:03:36] Am I doing too much? What purpose does this social media platform serve for me and has the cart away from me a little bit. I think that's kind of what's really important.

[00:03:47] **Stephen Calabria:** What do you see as being the major differences between patient populations when it comes to social media use. Like, a 30 year old, how does their typical social media use patterns differ from those in the geriatric population?

[00:04:01] **Maria Loizos:** For geriatrics specifically, there's gonna be two prongs, I like to say, and that probably differs. Well, okay, one of the prongs is probably similar to our 30 year olds, and that is, what are we using this for?

[00:04:15] Are we using it for connection? That's great, but comparison is the thief of joy, as they say, and if you are using social media, not in a way to connect with people, but to amplify the differences that you have with someone else or everyone posts the good things.

[00:04:32] No one ever posts when they're having a bad day or at least they're not honest about posting about what's going on during that day.

[00:04:37] And so, If you're using social media and you are constantly comparing yourself to others and what they're doing and how they're traveling and how many friends they have, that can hurt you rather than help you.

[00:04:48] And I think that is You Going to be the same across the board, no matter how old you are. Everyone likes to feel included. Everyone feels sad when they're excluded. That is pretty much the same.

[00:04:58] I think what makes our older adult population a little bit different is that as we get older, our brain changes. And so there's cognitive decline that comes with getting older. A lot of our older adult population isn't familiar with using technology, period, let alone social media usage, right?

[00:05:14] And so, COVID was great. Families were getting their older parents iPads and things like that to connect with their grandchildren, connect with each other while they couldn't be together.

[00:05:23] But then that's kind of like where it left off. So they were given these things, and then nobody was there to kind of help them use it, teach them how to use it. There's a lot of problems with that, right?

[00:05:33] And, and it's kind of layered in a way, you know, when you kind of mix cognitive decline with something like the internet, there's pitfalls that are, that are kind of out there, right? Are the people susceptible to scams, right?

[00:05:46] I've had patients come in really convinced that they're talking to Elon Musk, like really convinced, like, Elon needs my help. I don't think Elon needs your help. I don't think you're talking to Elon. So, that can be really dangerous for patients.

[00:05:58] Are they doing their banking online and do they have access to all of that and they're on social media? That could be problematic. There's also kind of this layer of the quality of things that they're consuming as well.

[00:06:10] The ability to kind of discern the information that they're reading and consuming and whether that's misinformation, whether that's propaganda, whatever that is, it's going to decline as we get older.

[00:06:21] And so when you have a population that kind of wasn't born and raised on technology and social media, and then you throw it at them and you let them have it, and then there's this burst of information constantly all the time, you run into issues.

[00:06:34] **Stephen Calabria:** Right, and I imagine too, for digital natives, it's far easier to sniff out a scam than it is for an older population, especially when a disproportionate number of scams seem geared towards geriatric populations, who are far less able, oftentimes, to discern what is real and what is not.

[00:06:53] **Maria Loizos:** Absolutely, absolutely. We're laughing now amongst each other about how out there it sounds like to feel that Elon Musk is sending me a message, but for our patients, for these older adults, this group of people, it feels really real to them.

[00:07:07] And the thing is, when you have someone who's isolated, they're vulnerable to these things, and people know that. So it's really easy to kind of get in there and say, Hi, I'm lonely too. Let's talk. Let's connect. Oh, I need help. Send me money.

[00:07:20] You know, that kind of avenue is really easy to walk down when you have a kind of a vulnerable group of people.

[00:07:28] **Stephen Calabria:** So we've talked about the vulnerability to misinformation. What are some other unique challenges and risks associated with social media overuse among geriatric populations?

[00:07:38] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, well, mood is a huge thing. We talked a little bit about comparison can really affect people. And, it can really amplify feeling lonely and different. And it can really cause a huge increase in depression and anxiety amongst older adults when they feel like social media has become too much.

[00:07:58] I talk a lot about like the quality of social media and that becomes a little bit, it's difficult. It feels almost subjective, feel like, Oh, Instagram has higher quality than Facebook, but like, it depends on the person.

[00:08:08] And so I think a lot of this is really person based, person to person and, and kind of, what is important to them? I think it's always important to kind of reassess all the time. What is the purpose of what you're doing, What, why are you on Facebook?

[00:08:24] What is the point of it? Are you just there scrolling forever or is there a reason to it. What is the purpose on scrolling all these news articles or whatever it is? It's kind of important to kind of check in with yourself all of the time.

[00:08:35] And I think when we stop doing that is kind of really where we run into a lot of the issues.

[00:08:40] **Stephen Calabria:** Well, the purpose too, you talk about the purpose. And if the purpose is to seek out information on a given subject, I imagine there are pitfalls there as well. Because if you are looking for something to buttress your already existing point of view, chances are you're going to find it somewhere.

[00:08:56] And again, for a population that is not accustomed to discerning what is true and what is not on the Internet, I imagine that that can lead you down some very treacherous informational pathways.

[00:09:08] **Maria Loizos:** Absolutely. I mean, there's this thing- like, herd mentality is a thing and it's a thing even on the Internet as well.

[00:09:14] We live in a society where the algorithm is really important and what we like and what we talk about out loud. I don't know. These things are kind of pushed towards you.

[00:09:23] So if you're someone who is looking for something very specific, you're going to be presented with all of those things on the internet, on social media, and you're going to feel like, Oh, I'm not alone in this.

[00:09:33] We all are thinking the same thing, even though you're quite literally in your own little bubble with people that think like you. You're not really looking outward. And that's always, you know, what I'm emphasizing, balance, you know, it, you have to balance it with real life. It's not enough, being on social media is not enough.

[00:09:53] And, you know, I particularly say that to not just, you know, our older adult population, but the families of our older adult population. It's not enough to just give your grandparent or your parent an iPad and say, Okay, we're connected. That's great. You have to kind of provide real world interaction as well. And that's, you know, for anyone.

[00:10:11] **Stephen Calabria:** Because it's that real world interaction that will give people a sense of perspective as to what is real, what is not, what is true, what is not, what is believed by the general population as opposed to thinking that, oh, this very niche opinion, this very niche interest is shared by everyone.

[00:10:31] **Maria Loizos:** By everyone, exactly. It's really important to kind of get out and look around and kind of connect with people and on varying things, you know, not just on the one topic that you think is really important.

[00:10:42] **Stephen Calabria:** From what you've observed, we've talked a little bit about cognitive issues. Are there any correlations between excessive screen time and cognitive or memory issues in the geriatric population?

[00:10:52] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, so, the Internet, social media technology can be really helpful for someone who has cognitive decline, you know, especially as things start to get more difficult. Utilizing technology for things like remembering to take your medications, or a doctor's appointment, things like that could be really helpful.

[00:11:08] But again, it kind of leaves the door open if you are setting reminders for things but not remembering what the reminders are for. You have

to take it a little bit further to make sure that it's assisting you and it's not hurting you.

[00:11:21] And so, along with the cognitive decline, I know we talked a little bit about it is, you know, your judgment changes a little bit as well. And so, your assessment of what is good and what is bad kind of changes a little bit as cognition declines.

[00:11:33] And that's not the same for everyone across the board, but, you know, it's good to be aware of.

[00:11:37] **Stephen Calabria:** Excessive screen time and cognitive or memory issues in the geriatric population. So, I mean, your average 30 year old user isn't going to have those same issues. And what these are only exacerbated through excessive social media use.

[00:11:52] **Maria Loizos:** So, it's not that excessive social media use is going to cause someone's memory to decline. Not in that way, right? It's not like social media use hurts your memory and now you can't remember anything.

[00:12:03] But what it does is it pulls your attention from things that are going around. And so a lot of the times I'll have patients come in and say, you know, my wife is saying all the time I don't remember a conversation.

[00:12:14] I don't remember what's going on. And a lot of the times it's then the wife comes in and goes, well, he's in his iPad like all day. And so you have patients coming in with these memory issues. And it's like, well, are you forgetting or are you not paying attention to what's going on?

[00:12:26] And that's kind of that thing that we talked about. It's if you don't get your head out of what you're doing and take in the real world, you're going to miss things. So, that's number one.

[00:12:34] The other avenue where social media use can really affect your memory is, if social media is becoming the thing that is honestly depressing you, it's not helping you in any way, mood really affects our memory.

[00:12:47] Think about just not feeling great, feeling like you're in a fog all the time. You do feel like you're forgetting things. And our mood really affects how we take in the world, how we remember things.

[00:12:57] And if social media has become the thing where it's affecting your mood, then yeah, you are kind of going along day by day and you're forgetting things. And it can feel really scary for our older adult population.

[00:13:08] **Stephen Calabria:** But wouldn't you say that's the same across all populations and not just geriatrics?

[00:13:13] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, but you know what, maybe a little bit, but the older you get, it kind of gets harder to compensate, right? Because things start to go as you get older. Not in a scary way.

[00:13:22] **Stephen Calabria:** What do you mean by compensate?

[00:13:23] **Maria Loizos:** So, maybe you're someone who doesn't remember a lot, but you're really organized, so you know how to kind of organize information in a way that kind of helps you.

[00:13:30] You kind of lose those things as you get older. It gets a little bit harder to kind of maybe plan or organize or, you know, pay attention and do all those things. And so you kind of need all your faculties working together in order to kind of help you function day to day.

[00:13:43] And so the younger you are, you don't think about it as much. It's automatic. We don't think about all of the things at once that we do all day to kind of get us from point A to point B.

[00:13:53] It's automatic. But as we get older, you know, word finding starts at 30. Okay? So think about someone now who's finding the right word. That problem starts at 30. So think about someone who's like 65 plus, they're gonna have maybe more trouble finding the right word.

[00:14:06] Different ways to compensate. How are we gonna get to where we need to be? And that applies for memory, it applies for, you know, our judgment when we're taking in and consuming social media.

[00:14:15] You kind of have to balance, and kind of work that way to kind of make sure that it's not impacting things like your mood and memory.

[00:14:24] **Stephen Calabria:** We've discussed cognitive and behavioral health risks. Now let's talk about physical health.

[00:14:29] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah.

[00:14:29] **Stephen Calabria:** Are there physical health risks associated with excessive social media use, especially among geriatric populations?

[00:14:35] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. I mean, I would say, for anyone, if you're spending a lot of time sitting, not moving a lot, not doing much and you're kind of consuming social media all the time, that's gonna hurt.

[00:14:47] That's gonna hurt your your physical health. And as all things, you know, if it hurts your physical health, it kind of is directly related to your cognitive health as well. So kind of all these things are connected. You really shouldn't be spending hours upon hours sitting.

[00:15:00] And not really moving around, especially as you get older, it's important to move to get that kind of cardiovascular, you know, even outside of just getting up and moving, it's important to get cardiovascular exercise in, especially as we get older, especially as our heart starts to change, especially as our brain starts to change.

[00:15:18] Physical activity is important, and so if you kind of cut all those things out and you're just sitting on your iPad or whatever it is, that's gonna hurt you in the long run, for sure.

[00:15:25] **Stephen Calabria:** So, in other words, if somebody is scrolling social media, chances are they are not doing it while on a treadmill.

[00:15:32] **Maria Loizos:** I would bet that they're not. I would bet that they absolutely are not. And in fact, if you're older, I probably would say, don't do that, because I don't want you to be distracted on the treadmill, and I don't want you to fall down, because that'll also be bad as well.

[00:15:43] **Stephen Calabria:** Right. Well, is there data suggesting that there is a correlation between greater social media use and declines in physical health?

[00:15:53] **Maria Loizos:** I don't know that the research points directly like that. I would say in a roundabout way, yes. Anytime you're being sedentary, it's just not good for your physical health.

[00:16:04] The research, it's tough when it's older adults and research regarding technology and social media use, because that population isn't researched as much as younger adults and social media use.

[00:16:17] Because for the longest time, it was considered that that population wasn't even touching technology. As time has gone on, we've learned that that's really not true.

[00:16:25] A lot of older adults are using technology and in fact they want to use technology, as long as it's presented to them in a way that they understand the utility of the technology, they know how to use it, you know, what's it for, they're okay to do that.

[00:16:39] The problem is, with all things, research is going to focus on who is using it the most, and because of that, older adults, that population, there's not as much research on it. So, a lot of the research kind of goes back and forth, that it could be good for you, but it could also be harmful for you.

[00:16:57] And kind of understanding and digesting what kind of technology they use, what kind of social media they use, that hasn't been observed as much or researched as much as it has been in our younger adult populations.

[00:17:09] **Stephen Calabria:** And I also imagine that because social media has been around now roughly 20 years, give or take, Facebook debuted 20 years ago as of this year. A lot of those people who used social media at a younger age have aged into a geriatric population.

[00:17:26] And so I imagine it's a little more tricky to study those populations now, even though they are social media users and have been for a while.

[00:17:35] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of tough to kind of gauge how people use it. And, and it's also a lot of this is, is dependent on self report. So you're hoping that the person you're interviewing is being really honest about what they're doing, how they're doing it, and how often they're doing it.

[00:17:51] And sometimes people aren't, right? I mean, maybe even I wouldn't be so honest about how many hours my phone tells me weekly I'm on it, right? So, that always complicates things a little bit.

[00:18:04] **Stephen Calabria:** With the rise of AI and immersive social platforms, how might the challenges of excessive use evolve, do you think?

[00:18:14] **Maria Loizos:** Oh, I think with all things, if we don't get a handle on how we use it, and how often we can use it, it's going to run away from us a little bit. I'm already, seeing a lot of things out on social media that are AI-created and our older adult population has no way to judge that.

[00:18:32] They have no idea what is AI created. They really think that this celebrity is doing XYZ in XYZ place, and they just don't know how to do that. Like, there's no literacy on that, and I think as things start to get created, and with all things, we see the good, how helpful it could be, but we also can see how harmful it is, and I think it's important to get ahead of that a little bit, and create these systems that can help these populations know, or at least navigate, how to take in AI and how to use it in a way that's appropriate and not in a way that could really be harmful.

[00:19:05] **Stephen Calabria:** Absolutely. Especially, with regulators always scrambling to keep up with advances in technology, I imagine a lot of lawmakers still have a MySpace account. How does social media use, in your opinion, and overuse influence resilience, especially in individuals who are already managing chronic stress or health issues?

[00:19:25] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. So, resilience is a lot of things, I think, and it's not so much, when I think about resilience, it's not so much about how much you can withstand, but I think it's also about how flexible you can be, and I think the thing about social media is, yeah, it could be really, it could be really great, it can open new worlds to us, but it also can be clarifying in a way as well, and I think it's important that we keep flexible, every day is like a new normal, and, Are we taking in information from social media and using it in a way that can help us and pivot when there's a problem that arises, or are we just staying in the same way?

[00:20:00] And I think, when you're talking about resilience, that, that is the part that's the most important, is how flexible can we be. Every day a new app is created. And so you have to be flexible in a way of how do you consume this new piece of media?

[00:20:11] **Stephen Calabria:** In terms of fostering resilience, does social media use have any kind of role to play? Or is it something to be more avoided than not?

[00:20:20] **Maria Loizos:** I don't think it needs to be avoided. I think I've encountered or used social media enough and I've seen enough patients that have used social media that I think it is really, can be really helpful and it can be a really great thing.

[00:20:30] But it's, as with all things, it's just, I'm going to say balance eight million times today, but I, it's really all about the balance of it. I don't think it hurts resilience. I think it could be really important, especially, during the

COVID pandemic when, I keep going back to that, but people were really isolated, and for a lot of people, their only connection was social media.

[00:20:49] The patients that we see, sometimes we're their social outlet, and so they couldn't see us, and the only way they could connect with us was through social media, or not really social media, but through technology in that way.

[00:20:58] So, I don't think, I don't want to be pessimistic about it. I can see the problems on the horizon, but I think that we can fix them, and I think that we can pivot, and I think we can be flexible and really use social media in a way that could be really helpful for our older adult population.

[00:21:13] **Stephen Calabria:** So we've talked about how social media can impact cognitive decline and even aid in cognitive decline. Is there any evidence of the reverse? That social media use can positively affect cognitive ability.

[00:21:27] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. I think that's a good question. It's not so direct. I think. A lot of it, it goes in a roundabout way. So in the same way that negative mood can affect our cognition, positive mood also can affect our cognition.

[00:21:39] So if we're using social media in a way that's actually joyful in a way that we're connecting with people, recipes, talking to whomever, all of those things,

[00:21:46] **Stephen Calabria:** Cat videos.

[00:21:47] **Maria Loizos:** Cat videos, whatever it is, puppy videos, whatever, your interests are, that's going to help. That's going to help. It's going to help your mood. It's going to make you feel better. You're going to feel like you're remembering a lot of things.

[00:21:56] You're more focused. All of that. I would be remiss to not bring up as a neuropsychologist, the cognition games that are all, all across social media, they have these brain games that you could do.

[00:22:06] And a lot of the times patients come in and they ask me, is this going to help me? Can I do these little games? Is it going to make me remember things? And the thing about games like that is that all that does is it makes you really good at the game.

[00:22:18] So you may practice on that every day, and after a week you might be so good at it. But the problem is that it doesn't really translate to real world things.

[00:22:26] **Stephen Calabria:** It gets you addicted to the game.

[00:22:28] **Maria Loizos:** Basically, there's no validity to doing these games and then in your day to day life. Okay, I'll remember to take my medications now because this matching game has helped me.

[00:22:36] So it's finding the right things and using it, again ,in the right way, that it in a roundabout way can improve your social cognition.

[00:22:43] **Stephen Calabria:** Let me push you on that a little bit. So that cat videos, puppy videos can be very good. However, the short dopamine hit that we get from all of those, seeing video after video after video getting these short infusions of dopamine can that have a negative effect in the long run?

[00:23:01] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, of course. We've said balance like a million times today. At least I've said balance a million times today. I have not said it once So it's been all me. Balance is important, right? So a couple of videos here and there to put you in a good mood.

[00:23:12] That's great. I'm in a bad mood. I do want to see puppies playing. I absolutely do. But six hours later, I shouldn't still be there scrolling through it. Get what you need out of it, and then you have to emerge and enter society again.

[00:23:24] And that's really the important thing. How are we going to take the puppy videos that we get, feel great about it, and then how are we going to put that out into the world and interact with society? That's important.

[00:23:34] **Stephen Calabria:** Let's say a patient comes to you and they are having issues with getting off of social media, perhaps they even recognize it themselves, what do you do at that point? How do you wean someone off of social media? What are the interventions?

[00:23:49] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. I mean, there's psychologists now that all they do is work with these populations to help them get off social media. It's an addiction, just like anything can be an addiction, whether that be food, whether that be drugs, you're getting something out of this.

[00:24:02] And, it's important to connect with your providers, psychologists, CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy, those things are really important to understand what is the thing that is triggering you to want to be on social media.

[00:24:15] And once you disrupt the trigger, or you assign a different behavior to that that's more helpful, more positive, that is how you translate that into change. And that's what's really important.

[00:24:27] **Stephen Calabria:** Is there a set amount of time on social media in a given day, that is harmful? Is it two hours? Is it four hours?

[00:24:35] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, I wish I had the number for that. I don't have that number. I think it's going to vary from person to person and I think you have to really look at your life and what you do and how much time you have and think of the bigger picture.

[00:24:50] If you're spending six hours a day, in 24 hours, that maybe doesn't seem like a lot. But think about six hours over 365 days. That's a lot of time. And for people that are older, there's not that much time left. Not to be negative, but it's reality.

[00:25:04] And so you have to ask yourself, how much time do you want to spend not really living life, but pretending to on social media.

[00:25:12] **Stephen Calabria:** I have heard in the DSM, there are diagnostic criteria around addiction specifically relating to gambling. Does that provide us any kind of roadmap for how to understand social media overuse and addiction?

[00:25:25] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah. I think the thing about the DSM is that, it's evolving over time. And so I think the last edition was maybe 2012, something like that. And social media, while it was available in 2012, obviously those things have evolved over time and it's different now than it was.

[00:25:43] I think, with all things, the important thing about the DSM is when you're talking about a disorder or anything like that, it's going to be person to person dependent because is it affecting this person's ability to function normally?

[00:26:00] And there are some people who can spend a lot of time on social media and they are still functioning, right? They're still gonna work, they're still gonna school. They still have relationships. It's not impacting them in that way.

[00:26:12] Whereas for someone else, they may be spending a lot less time, but it's really affecting their ability to function normally. And so whenever the kind of the DSM is brought up, it's helpful diagnostically.

[00:26:23] As a psychologist, as a neuropsychologist, I utilize it. But I think when I am thinking about the DSM and how I am assessing someone's disorder, it's really back to how are they functioning on a day to day basis. It's really person dependent.

[00:26:40] So it helps us get closer to the problems and what they look like, but it really is going to be person to person dependent.

[00:26:46] **Stephen Calabria:** Does social media use or overuse impact personality disorders?

[00:26:52] **Maria Loizos:** I think when it comes to personality disorders, there's always this discussion of self medication, and whether that be drugs, whether that be, alcohol, social media, it can impact our health in that way or personality disorders in that way, because they're utilizing the social media in a way to make themselves feel better, which if they're not using it the right way, it could actually make them feel worse, right?

[00:27:13] And that makes everything worse. So when you're dysregulated, everything kind of gets amplified. And so in, in that way, it can be problematic.

[00:27:20] **Stephen Calabria:** Are there any studies out there measuring emotional dysregulation stemming from social media overuse?

[00:27:27] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, so there's a lot of research in our younger populations regarding to how activated someone is getting, how emotionally responsive they are to social media. There's research that's constantly happening in our older adult population.

[00:27:39] It just gets confounded a lot of the time by what they're using, how they're using it. Not everyone is using it the same way, so it's hard to assess a population and kind of make huge inferences about how dysregulated they're getting when you don't really know the nitty gritty of how it's happening.

[00:27:56] What we do know is overall, when you are beginning to compare yourself to others and feel badly about that and feel like everyone else is the grass is so much greener on the other side and my grass is horrible.

[00:28:08] No one's ever watered it. The flowers are dying, that makes us feel bad, right? And it just takes one little bit and it becomes a loop where then you look at everything and feel like you're having a bad time.

[00:28:19] **Stephen Calabria:** Well, I imagine that feeling has really grown and exacerbated in the social media era. You hear people all the time talk about, Oh, I felt so bad. Everyone else it seems is so much further ahead of me. Everyone has posted that picture of them posing in their doorway of their new house with their keys. I did a thing, you know.

[00:28:39] **Maria Loizos:** Or on vacation and a brilliant play.

[00:28:41] **Stephen Calabria:** Yes. I can afford to be on that vacation. Look at me. this is a relatively new phenomenon, is it not? Well, keeping up with the Joneses has been around for a while, but this is that on like, overdrive.

[00:28:53] **Maria Loizos:** It is on overdrive, especially when you take into consideration the fact that now social media is a huge way to make money. And that is going to be driving a lot of people's attitudes.

[00:29:05] When you have someone who is, and this kind of goes back to the AI thing too, right? Are we discerning what we're consuming in a way that makes sense?

[00:29:11] If you have someone who's posting all these beautiful things, but it's sponsored or it's a way to get money in a way, that happened over COVID because people were at home and they weren't working and they had nothing to do.

[00:29:22] And so they had to make money some way. So now everyone's an influencer. It doesn't matter how old they are. That becomes problematic, in a way.

[00:29:31] When you are looking at someone and they're presenting their lives in such a way, but it's so curated because they're trying to make money.

[00:29:38] Yeah, it's gonna make you feel horrible if you don't realize, hey, it actually says hashtag sponsored content.

[00:29:42] **Stephen Calabria:** So it's not Actually real.

[00:29:44] **Maria Loizos:** It's not real at all. It's not real at all. No one is having a horrible day and then posting themselves. Maybe they're posting themselves crying, but regularly people are not doing that when they're having a bad time.

[00:29:53] They're posting the good times, when they're having the best time. And that can, for a regular person, who also has highs and lows, can look at that and feel, Oh, I only have lows because they are having just highs.

[00:30:07] And it makes your highs almost feel not as good in comparison, which can be really harmful.

[00:30:12] **Stephen Calabria:** Yeah. My high may be good, but it isn't me sitting on a beach on my fourth vacation of the year good.

[00:30:18] **Maria Loizos:** You bet. Yeah. You betcha.

[00:30:19] **Stephen Calabria:** Are there any social media best practices you think it's important to share with our listeners?

[00:30:24] **Maria Loizos:** Yeah, I would say it depends on who you are.

[00:30:26] So if you're a family member of someone who is older and they're on social media, you do have to take a little bit of an active role in that. You can't let someone just, here's the keys to the car you've never driven before, because that's really what it is.

[00:30:40] If this is someone who has full, unfiltered access to all of social media, it may be the time to put in some privacy settings, limit some things. You have to help your family member be on the internet.

[00:30:54] How do we use it? What are things to look out for? Those are the things that are really important. I would say if you are a patient yourself, you're an older adult and you're on social media, the best practice is balance always. Again, a million and one times I've said it now.

[00:31:09] Make sure that you're asking yourself, what purpose does this serve. Is this just making me upset? Or are you using it as fuel to then go out and do things, right? You read a really great article about XYZ volunteering and now you're going out and you're doing it.

[00:31:21] Or are you just consuming it and it's making you feel horrible? Those are the things that I would say, for family members and for patients are good practices always when you're on social media.

[00:31:30] **Stephen Calabria:** Dr. Maria Loizos, thank you so much for being on Road to Resilience.

[00:31:33] **Maria Loizos:** Thank you for having me.

[00:31:36] **Stephen Calabria:** Thanks again to Maria Loizos for her time and expertise.

[00:31:40] That's it for this episode of Road to Resilience. If you enjoyed it, please rate, review, and subscribe to our podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Want to get in touch with the show or suggest an idea for a future episode? Email us at [podcasts@mountsinai.org](mailto:podcasts@mountsinai.org).

[00:31:55] Road to Resilience is a production of the Mount Sinai Health System. It's produced by me, Stephen Calabria, and our executive producer, Lucia Lee. From all of us here at Mount Sinai, thanks for listening, and we'll catch you next time.