

reels **2** real

ESCAPE ROOM

# ESCAPE THE FEED

ARE YOU USING SOCIAL MEDIA...  
OR IS IT USING YOU?



SOLVE  
THE CLUES



BEAT THE  
ALGORITHM



WORK  
TOGETHER



ESCAPE TO  
REAL LIFE



60 MINUTES.  
ONE MISSION.

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME. **LIVE** YOUR REAL LIFE.



# Escape the Feed

## OVERVIEW

This is a paper-based escape room about how social media affects attention, focus, mental health, and perception. The goal is for students to experience the distraction and manipulation effects social media has through puzzles rather than being directly lectured about it. This is a great activity to include in clubs such as Active Minds, led by student leaders.

After each puzzle, student leaders should lead a brief conversation about the activity and the lessons learned. Talking points and tips to break social media addiction have been provided to help with the conversation. Remember the goal is to engage students in discussion on how social media can take over our lives. It should be collaborative, not a lecture.

This escape room is designed to take about 60 minutes including discussion, while keeping teens engaged and entertained. If you have a large number of participants, consider dividing them into teams to compete for the fastest time.

## OBJECTIVE FOR PLAYERS

Players must work through a series of puzzles to “escape” an algorithm designed to keep them distracted and engaged forever. Each solved puzzle reveals a word or code that unlocks the next section. The final goal is to regain focus and escape “The Feed” by solving all four puzzles.

## INTRODUCTION: (read before starting the escape room)

You have been selected to participate in a behavioral study on attention and digital engagement. Over time, the system began adapting to its users. It learned how to keep people scrolling, reacting, comparing, and consuming without stopping, essentially “addicting” them. Most users never notice they are trapped. Your objective is simple: Regain your focus. Break the engagement cycle. Escape The Feed.

# Puzzle 1: NOTIFICATION OVERLOAD

SEARCH THROUGH THE CLUTTER TO SPELL YOUR ANSWER



# Puzzle 1 Summary

All the notifications we receive can distract us from our everyday goals and tasks. In this simulation, you were bombarded with all sorts of information and notifications that may seem urgent at the time, and probably lost track of what you were supposed to be doing by reading them all. When everything competes for your attention at once, important details become easier to miss. As interesting as our notifications are when they are telling us things such as posts, like counts, comments, and more, it is also important to not lose sight of the bigger picture. We should prioritize our tasks and not allow constant distractions by our screens to slow us down. Prioritization is key when it comes to balancing socials with our everyday lives.

**MANY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE REPEATED CHECKING AND SCROLLING - KEEPING YOU DISTRACTED AND ADDICTED.**

## TIPS:

- Put your phone somewhere out of reach while working or studying so notifications are less tempting to check. You can also use the Do Not Disturb mode on your phone.
- Schedule “notification-free” time to help keep you focused on what really matters.
- Create a top three list of daily accomplishments you want to complete before getting on social media.
- Use the “Priority before Phone” rule – Before opening social media, complete one important task. Small wins build momentum and make it easier to keep your priorities.
- Find real life activities that bring you enjoyment: constant notifications train your brain to expect nonstop stimulation and make focused tasks feel harder.

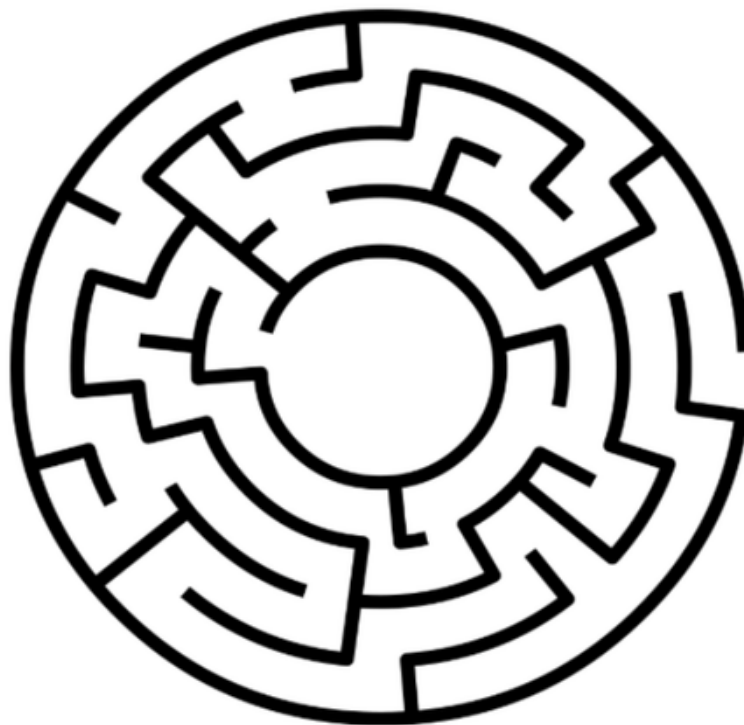
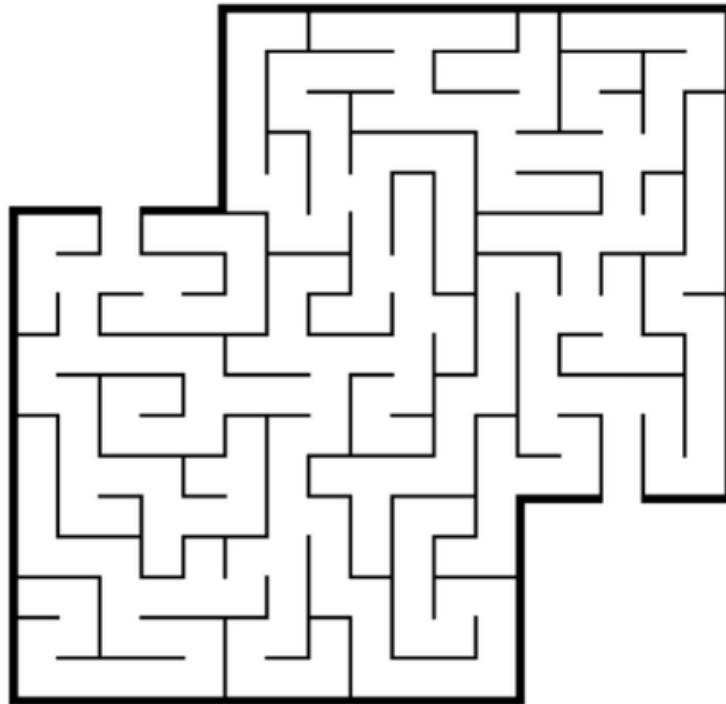
## Puzzle 2: MULTITASK



### RULES:

1. Students have 2 minutes to study this image and its digital details.
2. After two minutes, they must complete the mazes on the next page.
3. Finally, they answer the questions on the next page.

## STEP 2: SOLVE THE MAZES



### **STEP 3: ANSWER THE QUESTIONS**

QUESTIONS:

**The first letter of each answer is one letter to the correct clue for puzzle 2.**

- Which app showed the highest screen time?
- Which app had the highest number of notifications?
- What day was it on the clock?
- What notification appeared near the top of the Lock Screen?

## Puzzle 2 Summary

This task simulated the idea of 'multitasking'. When we are busy working on a task and take a break to do something else that is unrelated, we make careless mistakes, miss details, and forget things. The same thing happens when we divide our attention by checking notifications, viewing social media, or scrolling. It is hard to go back to what we were doing in the first place with focus and detail. Multitasking and social media addiction go hand in hand with each other in a cycle. The more someone interrupts a task to check social media, the stronger the habit becomes, and the harder it is to focus without checking. For example, when homework gets challenging, you may check Instagram. Or if you're waiting in line, you may open TikTok. Over time, checking becomes an automatic response rather than a conscious choice. Focusing on tasks becomes harder, productivity decreases, and the addiction cycle becomes harder to break.

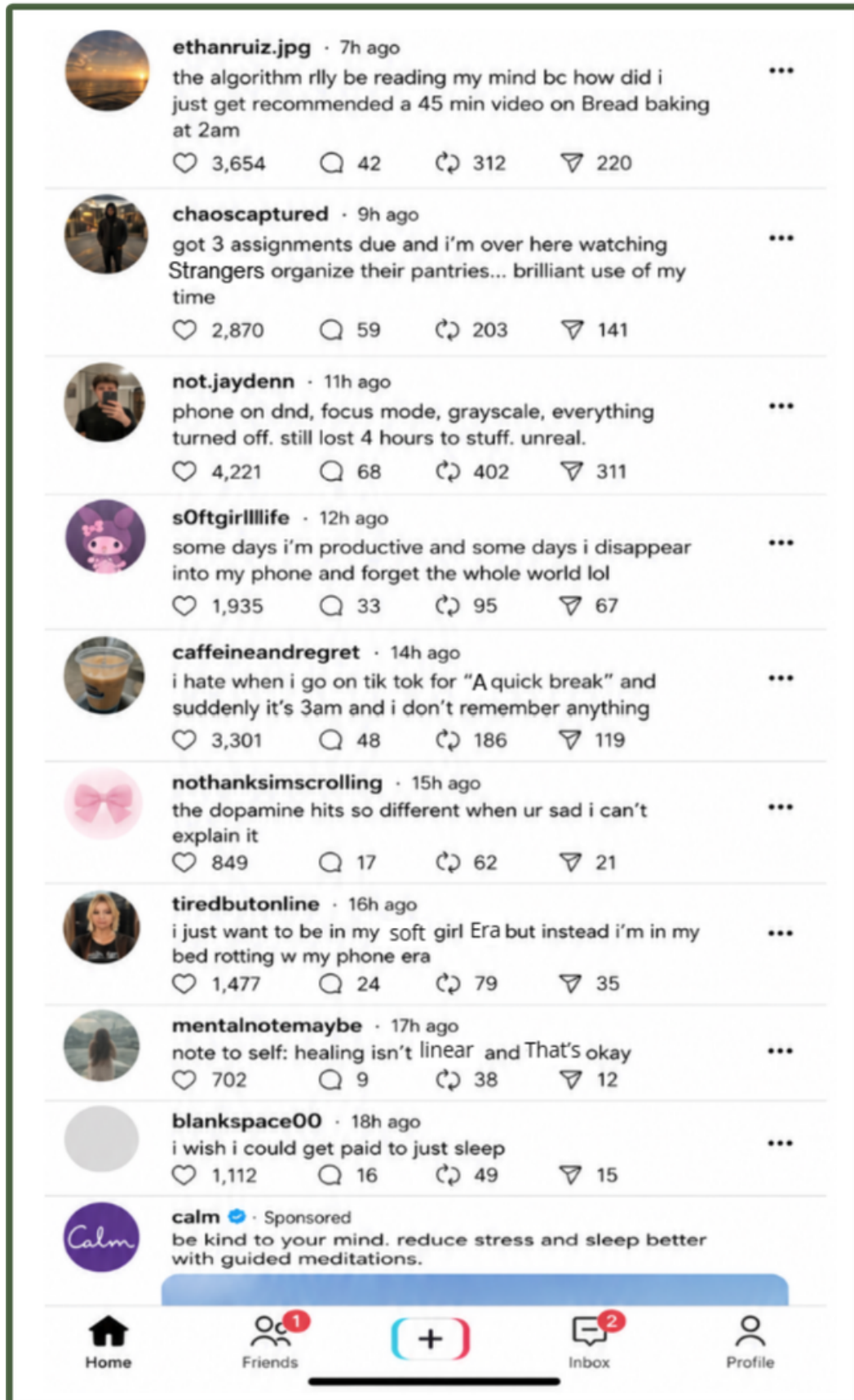
### **STUDIES SHOW THAT MEDIA MULTITASKING IS USUALLY LINKED TO POORER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.**

#### **TIPS:**

- Use social media as a scheduled break. Instead of checking every few minutes, work for 30 minutes and take a 5 minute social media break.
- Replace the social media habit. Many people don't actually want social media, they want a break. Substitute the scrolling break with walking, listening to a song, or talking with a friend in person.
- Finish one task before starting another. Instead of bouncing between scrolling and a task, complete the task first and then reward yourself with a brief social media break.
- Set limits on apps. This can help reduce automatic scrolling habits and improve focus.

## Puzzle 3: INFINITE SCROLL

SEARCH THROUGH THE FEED TO FIND WHAT STANDS OUT



## Puzzle 3 Summary

This challenge was an example of how social media affects our attention span and ability to analyze material. In this activity, you were overwhelmed by lots of posts and skimmed through them searching for your clue. When we skip through so much content, we get overloaded and can miss important details. This overload of information also affects our ability to stay focused especially with activities that don't reward us as quick. As a result, activities that require patience like reading, writing and studying can feel less engaging and become more difficult the more we use social media.

**SHORT FORM CONTENT TRAINS YOUR BRAIN TO EXPECT SOMETHING NEW EVERY FEW SECONDS WHICH LEADS TO POORER COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE AND A REDUCED ATTENTION SPAN OVER TIME.**

### TIPS

- Work on your attention span by trying activities like reading, drawing, crafting and writing.
- Build your focus stamina. Attention works like a muscle, so the more you practice the stronger it gets. Start small with 15 minutes of uninterrupted work and build up from there.
- Give your brain quiet time. Not every free moment needs entertainment. Let yourself be without distraction while waiting in the car.
- Be intentional before opening an app and ask yourself:
  - Why am I opening this?
  - What do I hope to do?
  - How long do I want to spend?

## Puzzle 4: MISINFORMATION

FOR EACH OF THE 5 SECTIONS, FIGURE OUT WHICH POST IS MORE CREDIBLE. THEN, USE THE NEXT PAGE TO DECODE THE NUMBERS WITH EACH CREDIBLE FACT FOR YOUR NEXT WORD.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1</p> <div data-bbox="159 481 454 884"><p>18 @Official_NortheastHigh</p><p>campus will dismiss at 1:00 pm friday due to severe weather. buses will run immediately after dismissal</p></div> <div data-bbox="470 481 766 884"><p>20 @Cougars_student_section</p><p>school is canceled tomorrow because of the storm! don't even bother showing up lol</p></div> | <p>2</p> <div data-bbox="813 481 1109 884"><p>7 @scholarships_247</p><p>everyone who comments 'done' gets a guaranteed \$5,000 scholarship</p></div> <div data-bbox="1125 481 1420 884"><p>5 @Collegeboard</p><p>registration for the sat closes friday at 11:59 pm. register through your college board account</p></div> |
| <p>3</p> <div data-bbox="159 974 454 1377"><p>15 @wellnesshacks</p><p>drinking lemon water every morning prevents you from getting the flu</p></div> <div data-bbox="470 974 766 1377"><p>5 @cdcgov</p><p>washing your hands regularly helps reduce the spread of many illnesses</p></div>                                                                         | <p>4</p> <div data-bbox="813 974 1109 1377"><p>12 @apple</p><p>software updates often include important security improvements</p></div> <div data-bbox="1125 974 1420 1377"><p>10 @phone_hacks</p><p>if you never update your phone, spies can't collect your data</p></div>                                               |
| <p>5</p> <div data-bbox="486 1489 782 1892"><p>25 @spacefacts</p><p>the moon appears larger because it moves closer to earth every friday</p></div> <div data-bbox="805 1489 1101 1892"><p>19 @nasa</p><p>the next full moon will be visible friday evening, weather permitting</p></div>                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

# Decoder Chart

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J  | K  | L  | M  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| N  | O  | P  | Q  | R  | S  | T  | U  | V  | W  | X  | Y  | Z  |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

## Puzzle 4 Summary

This activity was a demonstration on misinformation in social media. Social media is designed to encourage fast thinking instead of critical thinking. When we scroll quickly, we are less likely to stop and ask if the statement is true, or if it is just people trying to get views. If we see the same statement multiple times, we are more likely to believe it as true and even share it. This becomes a problem if we are not fact checking. The truth can always be altered, or explained differently than what it truly is, so it is important to slow down and verify what you are viewing. This is why lies spread faster than the truth. Social media algorithms recommend content based on what you previously engage with, even if it is inaccurate or misleading. This means that you may see more of the same information on your feed, even if it is false. Shocking and emotional posts are more likely to draw attention and be shared, even if they are untrue.

**FALSE NEWS IS 70 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO BE SHARE THAN TRUE NEWS ON TWITTER (NOW X) AND IT REACHES PEOPLE SIX TIMES FASTER THAN TRUTHFUL STORIES.**

### TIPS

- Pause and verify before you share. Taking time to verify information from reliable sources can help prevent the spread of false information. Become part of the solution and not the spread.
- Think critically when multiple sources claim different versions of the same story. Some questions to ask yourself are:
  - Who created this?
  - What evidence supports this?
  - Can I verify it from a trustworthy source?
- Remember that confidence online and popular posts do not equal credibility or truth.

## ANSWER SHEET

TAKE EACH WORD SOLVED FROM EACH PUZZLE TO GET THE KEY PHRASE AND "ESCAPE THE FEED"

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWER KEY**

**REAL**

**LIFE**

**BEATS**

**REELS**

## GAME IN REVIEW

In this escape room, you learned about four of the big dangers of social media.

Distractions like notifications can prevent us from being able to accomplish tasks, and can prolong the things we are supposed to be doing if we get overwhelmed by notifications.

Multitasking can do a very similar thing as well, as it diverts our attention and leads us to either rush through tasks because we are doing multiple at the same time, or it can prolong our original activity because we are switching between many things at once.

Also, you learned about how our attention spans are getting worse because of all the short form content that we consume, preventing us from being able to go without our phones for extended periods of time, causing addiction.

And finally, you talked about misinformation and how quickly it spreads. False news is 70 percent more likely to be shared than true news, as it is easier to be involved in with all the emotion in the messages.

Of all four topics, which one affects you the most?

## PUZZLE HINTS & TIPS

**IF PARTICIPANTS NEED HELP IN SOLVING THE PUZZLES, PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING HELPFUL HINTS**

### **PUZZLE 1**

Search through the notifications to find individual letters that stand out.

### **PUZZLE 2**

If participants need assistance in answering the questions, let them study the picture again briefly.

### **PUZZLE 3**

Search through the feed and look for words that start with a capital letter.

### **PUZZLE 4**

Look at the sources of the post to determine credibility.



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