

Personal Jeremiad: How the Inauthentic Curation of Social Media Has Destroyed Our Perception of Ourselves and Others

By Avril Fenlon, Holy Child Rye, Class of 2025

In an age dominated by the allure of social media, we collectively yearn for a world where authenticity reigns supreme—a digital landscape where genuine connections flourish, untainted by the masks of curated perfection. Nevertheless, it quickly becomes clear that we, the inhabitants of the digital age, have fallen short of this ideal as we traverse the virtual world. We've given in to the art of inauthentic curating in our quest for online acceptance, painstakingly crafting well-constructed identities that are far different from who we truly are. Our digital identities are frequently flawlessly polished, creating an illusion that warps how we see ourselves and others. We focus far too much on how our “feed” looks, spending hours on end scrolling through and meticulously editing every detail of a picture for a bi-annual post on Instagram that most of our peers will mindlessly like and scroll past. If social media is meant to be the true expression of who we truly are, why does it have to be this way? Why do we have an unexplainable pit in our stomach and desire to hide our phones away the second we hit “post”? The reason for this is that we have put too much emphasis on who we are and how we are perceived merely based on a shallow account page. We act as if we can tell everything about a person based on a profile picture, a short bio, and a couple of pictures or story highlights. In turn, we feel as if we have to present the most perfect and polished image of ourselves so we can be perceived exactly how we want to be.

The year is 2014 and you go on Instagram. Your favorite celebrity has posted a random picture of their dog with a tacky filter over it, or maybe your friend has spammed 5 different pictures in a row with each post getting no more than 3 likes each. But who cares? Back then, Instagram was a place where one could carelessly share what they wanted without feeling the

need to curate a perfect feed or put an unnatural amount of thought into a singular post. A phrase that I hear circulate often is “make Insta casual again!” Why can’t we? Why do we feel the intrinsic need to please those who may never know the depths of who we truly are, and why are we allowing ourselves to place so much energy into the hands of those who don’t care to know us? We believe that this heavy curation of impersonal Instagram feeds is meant to represent who we are, but what if the frequent and meaningless posts are what represent our true selves?

The effects of this hidden insecurity are severe: we compare our unvarnished lives to the highlight reels of others, which breeds feelings of inadequacy and isolation. The result is an epidemic of loneliness. A generation that suffers from insecurity and has a distorted perception of reality, where likes and follows are more important to us than the quality of our relationships, is the result of social media's authenticity deficit. We must accept the flaws that define us and expose the true nature of who we are underneath the layers of digital illusion we create for ourselves. We can create a community where vulnerability is embraced as a strength and where laughter and imperfection coexist by doing this, reestablishing the groundwork for real connection.

I’m not saying that you have to post everything you see every day on Instagram to be an authentic and genuine person. Focusing too much on what you post and when you do it just creates a never-ending cycle of insecurity and insincerity. I’m just saying that we should collectively learn to remove the pressure we put on ourselves and others concerning the social landscape we live in and stop giving it so much weight. We all have to take a step back and learn that a few cute pictures don’t define who we are, and in all honesty, you can never learn everything about a person through a screen. I believe that we all have different and beautiful ways of expressing ourselves, and social media will never be an exact or totally accurate representation of that. During this era of technology, we can all learn how to build healthy

relationships with our digital personas and fearlessly allow them to be extensions of our pure selves, not an impersonal facade of who we think we have to be.