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23 April 2018

Technology: Help or Headache?

From sending an email to a colleague, to writing an English paper, and even to solving a math problem, technology has a colossal impact on society. In 2015, an estimated 68% of U.S. adults have and use a smartphone (Anderson). Some would consider themselves to be nearly dependent on technology; for example, an accountant’s job is much more convenient with access to online recordkeeping. While technology can assist in nearly all areas of life, it can become time consuming. People tend to waste time playing games, burning hours into a tv show, or aimlessly scrolling through social media platforms, such as Facebook. This can cause people to become unaware of the world around them, such as the time they lose with their family. Although technology has been helpful to society, technology makes people feel alone because of “The Fear of Missing Out”, the unplugging of individuals from reality, and the loss of valuable memories and relationships.

One way that people are isolated from each other by technology is through the Fear of Missing Out. The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has been defined as “(. . .) a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (. . .)” (Wegmann). A few of the symptoms of FoMO include fear of exclusion, obsession over social media, and increased sensation of stress or anxiety. The apprehension being left out is triggered by others seeing posts on social media. For example, if one person posted a photo of themselves and their acquaintances, certain individuals who see it feel left out; one can feel this exclusion the most when their friends attend events without them. Therefore, the excluded individual feels the need to continue checking social media to assure they are not “missing out”. This would be a coping mechanism to regain that assurance of being included in events. However, the certain individual being left out falls into the hole of social media, or in other words, they become obsessed with other people’s lives. When people become obsessed with technology, they isolate themselves from reality.

While technology and video games can be entertaining, they are also a distraction from the real world. The research company Nielsen is a company that conducts reports on technology use. Nielsen preformed a survey in the first quarter in 2016. “The report examines large trends in penetration, users and usage across all platforms; shows how different demos and race/ethnicity groups spend their media time; and explores the contributions of heavy users (Nielsen).” The results were shocking. “Americans devoted about 10 hours and 39 minutes each day to consuming media during the first quarter of the year (Howard).” This was quoted from an article by the news company Central News Network, who wrote an article about the survey. People are addicted to technology. An addiction is defined as “being physically and mentally dependent on a particular substance, and unable to stop taking or using it without adverse effects.” When people become dependent on technology, they put all of their time and money into using and buying technology. This can affect people’s time management. For example, if a student is given the choice between completing their homework assignment or catching up on the newest season of their favorite television show, the student is more than likely going to choose what they enjoy most, which is their television. It is how humans function; when they are placed in a decisive situation, they are going to choose what is more important to them. In this scenario, technology is more important to the student than finishing an assignment. People prefer to do what they enjoy, and when caught up in the moment, they do not realize that they are distancing themselves from reality to use technology. Another example of how individuals become unplugged from reality is Linden Lab’s *Second Life. Second Life* is a 3D simulation game created simply for entertainment. The possibilities are limitless- one can create an avatar, build a house, travel, and socialize. “Creators around the world continually develop exciting new content and experiences and profit from selling millions of virtual items on the marketplace” (“Create Virtual Experiences”). However, this is an augmented version of reality; people become glued to a screen for hours on end to play a game with a life that they dream of, rather then enjoying the life they have now. Technology severs peoples connection to reality; when people are unplugged from reality, they lose valuable time with friends and family.

People use technology as a distraction from the outside world, and even the inside world. People isolate from each other by using technology; more specifically, by playing video games. A new viral trend is the video game *Fortnite*, or a one-hundred player-versus-player shooting game (“Fortnite”). This game’s popularity is soaring; *Fortnite* had 3.4 million players in February 2018 and growing (GameCentral). This game is very entertaining and can be considered addictive. While people who play this game may enjoy the experience, however, too much play is unhealthy. For example, if a person becomes so infatuated with a game, they may ignore family members and the people around them. They may shut themselves in a dark room to play this game and to master it. They may refuse to spend time with family and friends. The addiction to technology isolates the addicted from the outside world.

Although technology can be very helpful and entertaining, it can make people feel isolated from the outside world. Fear of Missing Out is the feeling that one gets when being excluded from social events; this is one way to feel alone. Another way is by individuals becoming obsessed with video games, such as *Second Life* and *Fortnite*. Becoming addicted to these games should not be overlooked; it can cause people to become distanced from reality and family. Peoples addiction to technology can be unhealthy for the individuals’ body, mentally and physically; more specifically, it can make people feel alone. As quoted by *Alone Together,* “Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we can feel utterly alone” (Turkle).

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