[Alert sounds from iPhone, iPad, email, Facebook notification]

Wow, I have so many notifications first thing in the morning. I must be really popular huh? Well interestingly enough most of them have little to do with me. Spam emails, random Facebook notifications, mass snapchats, news alerts, and so on.

The average American spends roughly 24 hours a week online. That’s a whole day of your week. Gone. And the average phone user picks up their phone 150 times a day. 62% of Americans say that the internet is important for maintaining social relationships. But is it really helping or hurting us socially?

Today I will be talking about the effect technology has on children and teens who are the target consumers for many apps and websites. Because everyone is always upgrading to the newest tablets and phones, children are becoming technology experts by the time they’re 8 years old. But that is hurting their social skills. Kids between 8 and 10 years old are spending about 8 hours a day behind screens.

Kids in this generation aren’t playing outside like past generations. They aren’t even talking to each other. Why call and meet at school when they can text? But because of this they don’t know how to communicate and have little practice with social ques. You can’t see the reaction behind the text. The body language or facial expression. A study by Flashgap, an app with over 150,000 users found that 87 percent of millennials said they missed a conversation because they were distracted by their phones. And 54% said they experienced a fear of missing out if they didn’t check social networking apps.

Dr. Cal Newport gives a few reasons to quit social media in his TEDx talk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E7hkPZ-HTk>

But since many people are afraid to unplug. Here are a few key social skills that are declining as a result.

1) Eye Contact. And a study by Dr. Tamyra Pierce found a correlation between teens spending more time behind screens and higher levels of discomfort in face-to-face scenarios. Many avoid awkward eye contact by checking there phones even if there’s nothing new.

2) Conversation. Being an active listener involves looking at the opposite person’s physical ques and asking questions. But if teens can’t hold eye contact, it gives an impression of disinterest which hurts their reputation to hold a good conversation.

3)Dangerous Distraction. The brain cannot truly multitask and it splits attention between technology and other tasks at hand. This can make people less aware of the world around them when overly-focusing on technology. This has led to a rise in distracted drivers and accidents.

4) Attention Spans. Besides risking our safety at times, technology has decreased our attention pans. In more than a decade, our attention spans have shortened from 12 to 8 seconds. It becomes a battle to determine what is wasting our time and trying to focus on content that matters.

Technology isn’t all bad. There are so many positives that we can get out of using technology. Ordering online has never been more efficient, trees are being saved with eBooks, and electric cars are helping our planet. But in order to enjoy technology to the fullest with those around us, we need to know when to plug in and plug out. We need balance and can’t let our screens be the only things we experience.

Thanks for listening!

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