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27 March, 2023

## The Negative Effects of Technology on Teenagers

Using the word “addiction” to describe one’s cellphone usage is not something with which teenagers would conquer. Modern technological devices have become a staple part of everyday life for most people across the world, but the addictive relationship between teenagers and their cellular devices are in a category of their own. Many high school students have laptops they use for school work and homework, with the use of Zoom for online school during the Covid-19 outbreak making this even more common. In addition, many teenagers have personal cellphones, used to keep in touch with friends and family or to mindlessly scroll on social media apps for hours on end. The negative aspects of technology are often overlooked in favor of the ways it has advanced society or made people more connected. The reality, however, is that cell phones and other cellular devices are not as positively impactful on teens as they may seem.

Firstly, technology limits social interactions and increases feelings of isolation. Human beings are inherently social creatures who thrive off human interaction. We “require physical stimulation and social interactions” for our own mental well being (Rouse). People who use social media more frequently are three times more likely to have perceived social isolation (Madhav). “73% of heavy social media users report feeling lonely, compared to 52% of light

social media users.” (Primack). So with technology as a barrier, teens spend too much time engrossed in their phones rather than focusing on developing relationships with their peers, subsequently missing out on the importance and basic survival-like need of genuine, physical connections.

Continuing on the topic of mental effects, technology can have a very negative effect on the mental health of teenagers. Exposure to technology and social media can have lasting effects on a teens mental health, and is linked to an increased risk of depression and anxiety. The consistent usage of a bright screen can delay circadian sleep rhythms, which is known to contribute to depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues in teens. Furthermore, “Those who spend over 6 hours per day watching TV or using the computer are more likely to have moderate or severe depression levels.” (Nemecek). Technology and social media also have a large impact on a teenager’s self-esteem and body image. There is a constant pressure to compare yourself to unattainable beauty standards portrayed online. Additionally, cyberbullying is a major issue, with 59% of teens having experienced some form of cyberbullying (Atske). This is also dangerous for the teens who are doing the bullying because the ability to “hide behind a screen” desensitizes them to the impact of their words.

Finally, technology is extremely addictive, especially for adolescents. In a study done by Psychology Today, “70% of study participants expected to feel depressed, panicked, and helpless if their phone went missing. And 94% did report feeling troubled without their phone.” (Lemonade). Though teenagers may not realize it, nor want to accept it, their brains have slowly become dependant upon technology in the same way a person may be dependant on alcohol.

Everytime you see a text from a friend, or alert from a social media app, or notification that your favorite creator has posted something on Youtube, the chemical dopamine is released into your brain, which induces happiness. This association of phone usage with happiness triggers incessant need to check your notifications constantly, thus causing the formation of an addiction. This addiction only further exacerbates all the negative effects of technology listed above.

Though some may argue that technology has advanced society and made people more connected, there is no denying it's negative effects on human beings, but more specifically teenagers. It is known to limit social interactions, causing a disconnect people teens and their peers as well as an increased sense of loneliness. Additionally, it has a very severe negative impact on the mental health of teens. Technology and social media are known to increase the risk of depression and anxiety as well as cause issues with self-esteem and body image. Finally, technology is extremely addictive and only exacerbates the negative ways in which technology can impact the life and well-being of teenagers.

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