

Teagan Craig

Our Relationship with Mobile Technology

Technology is an incredible display of what the human mind is capable of creating. We have made it possible to increase lifespans, fly, create artificial intelligence, and each person is able to have access to a high performance pocket sized computer, a phone. With the power of this advanced technology comes responsibility, and companies involved in the industry make it their mission to make us more attached to our devices for commercial gain. As a society we have become addicted to phones and social media, to the point where we love them, and cannot put them down. However, the human relationship with mobile technology negatively impacts social wellness more than it benefits our livelihood. Social media is known to cause depression in young adults (Lin et al.) and there are various psychological impacts of devices on our everyday lives.

Relations are complex and unique depending on an individual's character, upbringing, and other determining factors. We share relationships with each person whom we meet and there are many things that can go wrong including codependency. Codependency is “A dysfunctional relationship dynamic where one person assumes the role of “the giver,” sacrificing their own needs and well-being for the sake of the other, “the taker”” (psychology today). These relationships can have massive impacts on an individual's wellbeing and in terms of technology, humans have a toxic codependency with their cell phones. Toxic codependency leads to obsession, low self esteem, extreme reactivity, and feeling powerless, all emotions that can be associated with our dependence on phones and social media. (Lamm) Our phone is “the taker”, displaying constant notifications, bright colors, and targeted content for an individual to consume

all while the person becomes “the giver” losing energy and time over moments spent on their phone and social media platforms.

Texting and driving is the perfect example of how our relationship has evolved from having a phone for convenience to needing a phone to suppress our obsessions. In December, I conducted my own survey for a statistics class in which I questioned students whether or not they text and drive. Of 28 Cardinal Newman seniors, 89% said they had texted and driven within the past week, with 96% admitting the text was not urgent. Picking up their phone while conducting heavy machinery felt validated by their obsessive needs. In 2020, there were a reported 3,142 individuals killed by people who were texting and driving (NHTSA). Social media has created a culture where individuals feel required to respond quickly to messages, even if it means putting other people's lives at risk. “9 in 10 teens expect a reply to a text or email within five minutes or less, which puts pressure on them to respond while driving” (Do Something). The need for constant online validation and communication puts young people at risk of accidents.

Phones can be a useful tool for protection, navigation, and staying in touch with friends and loved ones. Mobile devices provide individuals with apps including GPS which help people navigate unfamiliar locations all with the click of a button. On the same device, they can buy a plane ticket, email their boss, text their grandmother, and have access to their friends' exact location. These tools can be useful, and being grateful for these features on phone's is more than valid. Technology itself is not evil, and to say that mobile technology is simply a “bad thing” is not a correct statement since it serves people with real and useful purposes. Social media can be a place to connect with like minded individuals, find new interests, and share special moments with friends, though it can also be a place of jealousy and anxiousness.

Through an observation of my own friends I have examined the real life impacts of mobile technology on self esteem. Use of social media apps including instagram, snapchat, tiktok, and twitter contribute to issues involving self image. Likes on a post can determine the difference between a good and bad day, and online validation has taken the place of real life connections. When forming a relationship with another person, quality time and getting to know one another are essential to forming a strong bond. With technology, a portion of the beginning stages of a relationship have been taken over by communication via text and social media rather than in-person conversation. Generations are lacking social skills due to the convenience of technology and the ability to text rather than having a conversation. In moments of awkward silence or loneliness in public we rely on our devices for comfort or something to distract ourselves with instead of sitting with the silence. “One recent study showed that the mere presence of smartphones damages cognitive capacity – even when the device is turned off. “Everyone is distracted,” Rosenstein says. “All of the time” (Lewis). We rely on device’s for comfort in times of uncertainty and phone usage has become a part of our daily routine.

With technology and social media’s popularity continuing to develop, society is faced with a new obstacle: the impacts of mobile devices on an individual’s lifestyle. Our relationship with mobile devices have become so serious they have developed characteristics similar to those of human relationships. Evidence of toxic codependency can be seen in the emotions associated with using certain platforms. Addiction and obsession to phones is not uncommon and can be seen through texting and driving rates. People are willing to put their own life along with the lives of others at risk in order to respond to a text message, even if it is not urgent. The consequences of social media are severe and although there are benefits to the accessibility of mobile devices, the advantages have been manipulated and outweighed by the negative effects.

Works Cited

“Codependency.” *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers,

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/codependency>.

“Distracted Driving.” *NHTSA*, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>.

Lamm, Brad. “This Is What Toxic Codependency Looks Like.” *Breathe Life Healing - Addiction*

Treatment Center Los Angeles, 12 Feb. 2021,

<https://breathelifehealingcenters.com/toxic-codependency-looks-like/>.

Lewis, Paul. “Our Minds Can Be Hijacked’: The Tech Insiders Who Fear a Smartphone

Dystopia.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 6 Oct. 2017,

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/05/smartphone-addiction-silicon-valley-dystopia>.

Lin, Liu yi, et al. “Association between Social Media Use and Depression among U.S. Young

Adults.” *Depression and Anxiety*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2016, pp. 323–331.,

<https://doi.org/10.1002/da.22466>.

“11 Facts about Texting and Driving.” *DoSomething.org*,

<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-fact-about-texting-and-driving>.

“Codependency.” *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers,

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/codependency>.

