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English 110

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Title

Humans need technology. I don't mean devices such as printers or automatic doors I mean phones and computers. In more recent years, many people have become glued to and almost completely reliant on their phones for even the most simple of tasks. Unfortunately, some have become so attached to their phones to the point where they need them for even the most basic parts of being human, such as communicating with each other and even feeling happy or satisfied. The worst part is many people aren't aware of this dependence and see nothing wrong with their need to always be stimulated to be happy. In her book, *The Empathy Diaries*, Sherry Turkle addresses just that, humanity's ever-growing need for screens and constant stimulation, as well as the problems it causes. I believe the need for digital technology is created from the need to feel even the illusion of happiness or satisfaction.

I think because of the need to feel happy or satisfied, stuff like positive stories online have become much more appealing and because of that, some of us have developed a hint of a confirmation bias toward screens. Despite the fact Turkle never directly writes about a confirmation bias, I believe she briefly alludes to it when she writes, "We like to hear these positive stories because they do not discourage us in our pursuit of the new – our new comforts, our new distractions, our new forms of commerce. And we like to hear them because if these are

Commented [KA1]: I think this is a really solid start of a thesis! I think you should expand upon it to better answer the prompt. Do you think this problem has a fix? Or is there even a desire for a fix? Add on to this sentence and take a stance on that idea.

Commented [KA2]: This is a super interesting idea! I think this is a good place to explain why Turkle's call to action may be not feasible. Due to people's reliance on their phones and an addiction to the stimulation they provide, there is a complete lack of a realization of a problem or a desire to fix it.

the only stories that matter, then we don't have to attend to other feelings that persist" (349).

Providing a bit of context, people with a confirmation bias tend to search for or interpret information to verify and support their existing point of view on a subject (which in this case are phones and computers) rather than finding a different view that may cause discomfort. In the quotation above, when Turkle says "We like to hear these positive stories because they do not discourage us in our pursuit of the new." It shows we look for information that supports our beliefs, making us happy. Thus, we ignore the negative stories that make us feel bad. When we find information that makes us happy, we take it as a sign of how technology is, as stated by Turkle, a "proof of progress" and we should feel good about using it – justifying our unhealthy desire to constantly be behind our screens, rotting away in the illusion of happiness and satisfaction it brings us. As a result, a bias towards our screens is formed.

Moving along the lines of needing constant satisfaction. In *The Empathy Diaries*, Turkle talks about how there was an experiment that was run where someone was left to sit in a chair quietly, no phone, no books, nothing for 15 minutes. Turkle writes: "At the start of the experiment, they were also asked if they would consider administering electroshocks to themselves if they became bored. They said absolutely not: No matter what, shocking themselves would be out of the question. But after just six minutes alone, a good number of them were doing just that." (348). It is astonishing how people can't sit for 15 minutes without some form of stimulation. These people were so bored after just 6 minutes of having nothing to do they decided it would be better to "harm" themselves than to sit there and be bored for another 9 minutes. Not only does this prove the point that people need to feel satisfied even if it isn't genuine, but it also proves that a lot of people will go to great lengths just for that feeling because they are so used to getting it from their phones. I realize that a lot of people would argue

Commented [KA3]: You provide good context, however from an organization standpoint, it think to would be better suited before the quote. I think it would add better flow to your writing.

Commented [KA4]: I think because you already stated the quote in an earlier sentence you don't need to restate it here. Instead, just follow the quote with a phrase like, "In other words, Turkle states..." or paraphrase the essence of the quote.

Commented [KA5]: Consider adding a topic sentence here before hoping in to the experiment. For example, "Individuals have become so reliant on technology and the stimulation it provides that they have become unable to go without it for even short periods of time."

Commented [KA6]: Because you introduced the text in your intro, you can just refer to Turkle throughout the rest of your writing.

that there is absolutely zero way you could feel satisfaction from shocking yourself, and I agree. However, some people have become so accustomed to needing the feeling constantly to the point that anything that gets rid of their boredom will leave them satisfied. Obviously, the small group of people used in the experiment doesn't represent the whole population, but the fact that most of the people in that small group chose to shock themselves proves the lengths people will go to, to get even a hint of satisfaction.

It seems you can't go anywhere without seeing someone staring at their phone, whether they are driving or just standing in line at a grocery store, all of these people who can't bear waiting for a few minutes or even a couple of seconds without the instant satisfaction from their phones. Sherry Turkle also took note of this problem when she wrote, "when people are alone at a stop sign or in the checkout line at the supermarket, they seem almost panicked and they reach for their phones." (348). This quote from Turkle is a perfect example of how the need for our phones is created from our need to feel satisfaction or happiness, even if it's for very brief moments. Without the satisfaction that phones bring, "they seem almost panicked" It's almost like they go through a withdrawal of sorts without their phones. In the same paragraph, another example of this "need" is shown by Turkle, "We are so accustomed to being always connected that being alone seems like a problem technology should solve." (348). It showcases exactly the point I'm trying to make about people's reliance on digital tech. Many people look to their phones or computers to fix their problems because that's all they know how to do. Most likely, the same people who sit on their phones at stop signs, continuously crawling back to the only way they can find (what they believe is) true happiness and satisfaction, but in reality, it's just an illusion of the real feelings. It never truly makes you happy or satisfied and leaves you wanting more so you keep coming back to it, thinking this time will be different.

Commented [KA7]: I would use examples that are distinct from Turkle's. You talk about using phones while driving and when at a grocery store, but Turkle's quote uses these same examples.

Ultimately, in her book *The Empathy Diaries*, Sherry Turkle addresses humanity's ever-growing need for screens and constant stimulation, as well as the problems it causes. She brings many important ideas to light, about how our screens are affecting us in both positive and negative ways. The idea she introduces just briefly is the idea that I believe is the most important for people to know about. It is the idea that the need for digital technology is created from the need to feel even the illusion of happiness or satisfaction, and the reliance a large bit of the population has on technology to fix their problems and entertain them. Although Turkle only spent a small amount of time on the subject, I feel she did the topic justice and made those few lines speak a thousand words.

Works Cited

Turkle, Sherry

Commented [KA8]: Noah, this is good start. I think you should rework your thesis and go back to your body paragraphs and create topic sentences that can help you relate back to your main thesis. I also recommend that you read your paper aloud to find places of redundancy and to help with organization. You picked some really good quotes that make strong points, I just encourage you to make sure you setting up every quote effectively. I really like what you are arguing, the idea of technology creating an illusion of happiness and satisfaction, just add a piece to your claim that directly answers the prompt about the effectiveness of her call to action. Good draft!