

Santiago 1

Faith Santiago

Professor Miller

ENG110

22 April 2021

Whether we like it or not, technology is all around us. Going through my morning routine, I can count many ways that technology has embedded itself as an essential part that I cannot function without. Technology can now be used to perform essentially any task we can think of. In a discussion about these impacts of technology, some take the glaringly negative view that increased technology use only causes a deficit in necessary human functions like empathy, such as Sherry Turkle, a social science professor at MIT in her essay titled, “The Empathy Diaries.” Conversely, there are fresher voices in this conversation who take a more complicated stance on technology, like English composition students at the University of New England, Kaia Anderson in her essay titled, “Helping the Addict: A Call To Action” and Kathleen McGuire in her essay titled, “Technology and the Effects on our Life”. All of these essays approach the dilemma of the impacts of technology in differing ways, and what the future looks like for those so reliant on it. After analyzing these sources, I believe that since technology, mainly the internet, is so embedded in our lives, it is bound to come with a balance of benefits and drawbacks, especially in the context of communication and distraction. While we can appreciate the benefits that technology brings to our lives, we should also be actively working to rectify the bad habits that increased use of technology/the internet has given us.

The divide between those in favor of technology and those opposed to it is apparent in Turkle’s and Anderson’s works. Turkle expresses her disdain for what technology has done to

Commented [NK1]: The wording feels a little awkward here

Commented [NK2]: I would also add that they are first-year students just to have more information about them

communication when she writes, "...we often find ourselves bored because we have become accustomed to a constant feed of connection, information, and entertainment. We are forever elsewhere. At class or at church, or business meetings, we pay attention to what interests us, and when it doesn't, we look to our devices to find something that does" (Turkle, 344). Turkle is saying that the internet has made us bored with our everyday lives and increased our distraction from the world around us by providing a quick and easy way to get stimulation. This need for constant stimulation pushes us further away from each other and further into isolation due to technology. There is something so addictive about having access to vast amounts of information, all tailored to your specific needs. Why would someone want to put in all of the effort to find stimulation in complex and unpredictable conversation when the ease and familiarity of the internet is right at our fingertips? Despite Anderson agreeing that technology makes us more distracted, she believes that this is a separate issue from communication. She believes that technology is beneficial in this way, and increases communication. She expresses her more positive outlook when she writes, "Having access to a near limitless amount of knowledge in the palm of our hands had led to once unthinkable advancements in human efficiency and connectivity. Questions can be answered in mere seconds; calculations done in half that time. We can talk, text, or video chat anyone at anytime, anywhere." (Anderson 2025). Anderson is saying that technology's emphasis on efficiency has allowed for an increase in connection and the transfer of information. The internet has become a way for old friends and family to stay in contact, and even for new connections to be formed between people who would otherwise have never come in contact. Beyond communication, the internet allows for more people to educate themselves and be more informed about important topics. Anderson is saying that at their core, these are positive additions to people's lives. Anderson and Turkle appear to have opposing

Commented [NK3]: Maybe put a quick example right after, rather than just saying "due to technology"

Commented [NK4]: Really good lead up to the quote

Commented [NK5]: This feels a little removed from the rest of the claim maybe try to incorporate it more instead of just flat out saying it at the very end.

viewpoints on what technology does to our communication skills. Turkle believes that technology harms communication, and forces us into isolation. Anderson believes that technology increases communication and opens new possibilities. I find myself aligning with Anderson's viewpoint because along with presenting how technology provides many benefits, she also acknowledges that there is harm in the use of technology/the internet. Anderson expresses this when she writes, "I constantly find myself unable to focus on a task for a long period of time. Within mere minutes, I feel the urge to check my phone, scroll on social media, or even just look through my camera roll. Just something to distract me." (Anderson 2025). In this quote, Anderson balances how technology has allowed for more communication and information intake, with how it has also had a damaging impact on her ability to focus. This perspective is more nuanced than what Turkle presents, and Turkle even calls the increased ease of communication due to technology as not real intimate communication, and instead calls it "reminders' of intimacy" (Turkle, 349). In other words, Anderson provides a more balanced view on the impact of technology than Turkle, and this balance aligns with how I view technology in my own life.

The distraction brought on by technology is a worsening phenomenon, and with this is an increasing need to remedy this behavior. Turkle illustrates how people can actively take steps to limit distraction when she discusses how professors can limit distraction for their students. She writes, "...we have learned that a student with an open laptop will multitask in class. And we have learned that this will degrade the performance of not only the student with the open machine but all of the students around him or her...many [professors] begin the semester by announcing a device-free classroom policy or specifically set aside class time for 'tools down' conversation." (Turkle 351). In this quote, Turkle illustrates how she believes distraction, and by

Commented [NK6]: You make it sound like she talks about both in the quote when She only talks about the damaging impact. You could say something like she uses this quote to balance the positives and negatives of technology.

Commented [NK7]: Should probably make this a block quote

association communication, can be revived from the way technology has rotted it. Those aware of the issue must actively take steps to remove it from times when focus and genuine connection are needed. This solution can be applied to other aspects of life as well, such as not allowing phones at family gatherings, or putting your phone in another room while doing school work. Turkle is not suggesting the complete eradication of technology from our lives to correct our distracted ways. What she is trying to advocate for is using technology in a way that does not interfere with true human processes, such as being fully present and thoughtful in conversations with other people. McGuire describes a similar solution in her essay and believes that technology needs to have a balanced effect on people's lives. She writes, "[Technology] is useful to increase many skills in my life and be a tool for me. I gain many benefits from communication to easy access at the comfort of my home. On the down side it can cause anxiety, laziness and make me less aware. ...I believe that myself and others need to learn to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. This starts with forcing myself to lessen technology in my life. To stay consistent with a balanced life, I need to be aware of its harm and where it draws me away from real life." (McGuire 2025). In this quote, McGuire is saying something similar to Turkle. She believes that there is no harm in using technology as a tool, but when it starts to interfere with her human interactions, that's when she realizes that her technology consumption needs to be reduced. Both McGuire and Turkle emphasize that technology has no place in real-life interaction, and should be kept out of places where genuine focus and discussion are needed, no matter how difficult or awkward that may be. I agree with this idea, especially when McGuire references having a balance with technology. There is no benefit to completely cutting technology out of our lives, as it is so prevalent. I do believe, however, that defining when and where technology is an enhancer, and where it is an inhibitor is the key to breaking through the realm of distraction that

Commented [NK8]: Good job with the rap-up of the Turkle quote leading into the introduction of McGuire's quote.

Commented [NK9]: Also block quote

Commented [NK10]: You already said something along those lines just before the quote it feels a tad repetitive.

technology puts us in. Similar to both McGuire and Turkle, I believe that people need to be aware of how incessant use of technology negatively impacts them, and that making the effort to replace technology with genuine efforts to move toward proper conversations and focus is the key to breaking our bad habits.

Technology isn't going to disappear from our lives any time soon. It will always be present, giving us new ways to improve and even more new ways to regress. Our job, as the consumers of technology and the internet, is to use it on our terms. Embrace it as a beneficial tool, and be aware when it starts to overstep. Furthermore, we must take conscious steps as a community to disentangle it from our lives once the line is crossed.

Commented [NK11]: Good strong conclusion

Commented [NK12]: It's a really good start, I feel like in both paragraphs, you do a good job of putting the authors in communication and adding to it with your stance. Mostly I would work on the random wording things here and there to bring some better clarity, and also making sure to put bigger quotes as block quotes.