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How Easy Access to Technology Induces Addiction

Today, technology is everywhere you look. In some form or another, it plays a role in everyone's life. The role of technology has been contentious and has undergone several alterations since its inception in the 1970s. Digital technology has evolved from a tool at users' disposal to a means of distraction from everyday life. This change is discussed in the essay "In Defense of Distraction," written by Sam Anderson. Anderson, an American author and writer at The New York Times Magazine, uses his essay to argue that distractions can be beneficial by offering a necessary break as opposed to being a negative. Conversely, Kaia Anderson, a first-year student at the University of New England, employs her essay "Helping the Addict: A Call to Action" to highlight the addiction caused by the constant distraction of digital technology. In a similar vein, Myli Petrocci, another first-year student at the University of New England, points out the negative effects of technology-induced distraction on college students. I believe that easy access to technology and the distractions that it provides contribute to technological addiction.

Technology, although the cost has increased, has become far more accessible, leading to an increase in the number of people suffering from the distractions that it provides. As a college student, presumably every student has a phone or computer. But as you search through younger generations, you would expect the technology usage to decrease. But that is not the case. As technology has become increasingly popular, it has become increasingly easier to attain, no

matter your age. The increase in the usage of technology was seen in Sam Anderson's article.

Here he writes,

“Schoolkids spread their attention across 30 different programs at once and interact with each other mainly as sweatless avatars. One American study found that teenagers spend an average of 6.5 hours a day focused on the electronic world and young adults in South Korea are dying from exhaustion after online gaming marathons.” (2)

In this quote, Anderson is addressing the amount of time kids spend on technology in school and some who partake in deadly multiday gaming marathons. Similarly, In Kaia's essay, she discusses technology and how it has become a readily accessible drug that has intertwined itself into today's world. She claims, “Other areas of our lives like shopping, even grocery shopping, can be done completely over apps. The list is growing ever longer by the day. Dating, meetings, reading, and writing are just a small list of things that have been greatly influenced by the increase of digitalization” (Anderson). Here, Kaia analyzes where technology has emerged in daily tasks and how depending on it to complete such tasks has led to addiction. Where these quotes differ is the application of them. Anderson develops his quote into the claim that kids growing up now might have an associative genius that we don't and that they have a Zenlike state of focused distraction. While in Kaia's article, she argues that letting addiction run rampant causes the inability to focus and converse. I feel as though today due to technology humans are no longer expected to practice and develop these specific skills. As someone who has grown up with technology, whether it be my Leapfrog tablet or my iPhone, I have had technology at my fingertips. In the time that I have been using technology, I have seen a technological explosion. Companies cause older products to lag to rush to put out new products every year, forcing you to purchase new products. No one carries cash anymore because of “Apple Pay”. People would rather text than communicate over the phone or in person because actually talking is too difficult.

New technology has forcefully been pushed upon you. Because of the ease of technology, users are reliant on it. Technology has such a dominant role in today's world that you would struggle to navigate it without.

The human mind today has been molded into a figure that is reliant on quick bursts of information which has caused a decrease in attention span and furthers addiction. The quick bursts of information have replaced the once imaginative mind. This replacement is discussed in Anderson's article. He states,

“Adopting the Internet as the hub of our work, play, and commerce has been the intellectual equivalent of adopting corn syrup as the center of our national diet, and we've all become mentally obese. Formerly well-rounded adults are forced to MacGyver worldviews out of telegraphic blog posts, bits of YouTube videos, and the first nine words of *Times* editorials” (2).

Anderson is referring to technologies' place in society today, comparing it to continuously consuming corn syrup, a universally known sugar-filled substance. Along the same lines, Petrocci provides her readers with firsthand experiences surrounding technologies grasp on its users and how it has become more accessible for teenagers and young adults today. She expresses,

“Specifically, a few nights ago when I was so excited to finally be done with studying and in bed before midnight even, my body was ready for sleep, and I told my roommates I was going to bed and excited about it. I then opened my phone eyes, catching on a few notifications, then indulged in the screen, and I convinced myself that I deserved it and proceeded to let one and a half hours go by while scrolling on Instagram” (Petrocci).

Here, Petrocci explains the effects seen in Anderson's quote. She is backing his claims by using her own experiences as a college student. Petrocci uses her experience to highlight how

much of a grasp technology has on the minds of today. Because of the easy access to technology today, much like Petrocci, I have felt a serious decline in my attention span. I have found it increasingly difficult to focus on one topic at a time. I need to be on my technology. As I typed this essay, I bounced between four different tabs, texted 3 different people, and watched several TikTok's. This is not a unique experience however and that is seen in Petrocci's essay. I feel as people today have lost the ability to focus on relatively easy tasks because it requires them to spend more than 3 minutes on a task. Apps such as TikTok and Instagram feed their users with 15 to 30 second clips that provide them with a quick burst of stimulation and then force them to move on. This quick burst of stimulation has molded the human mind of today to be reliant on quick tasks rather than deep thinking, further cementing technology into their lives.

It is common today to hear the phrase “that will not fly in the real world” when someone, usually an older individual, criticizes technology use. Often, they are referring to how the constant use of technology causes a distraction that inevitably restricts everyday functions. This comparison of generations was touched on in Kaia’s essay where she highlighted the necessity of support between generations. She asserts, “Older generations love to criticize the technological dependency seen in the current generation despite its inefficiency at helping solve the problem. The truth is to combat phone addiction and enable the current generation to fix their issues regarding concentration and engagement, the proactive help of older generations is required” (Anderson). Here, Kaia claims that the older generation, which are oftentimes those who shake their fists at phones, are needed to combat the issue. In Petrocci’s essay, she directly analyzes her generation’s struggle. She maintains that “Being born into the era of a technological boom, it’s hard not to have everyday life be severely impacted by it. I feel now that little choices we make each day, for example, to pick up a book instead of “doom scroll” before bed can have major effects on a person’s well-being and sleep habits.” In this quote, Petrocci explains her

generation's experiences with technology which runs parallel with claims made by Kaia. I feel as though both Kaia and Petrocci show how constant exposure to technology, whether through generational habits or personal choice, creates an environment where addiction thrives. In my lifetime, I've been told to "just put the phone down" without being shown how to build better habits or focus strategies. Or I've caught myself scrolling, telling myself I'll just check one thing, and then suddenly, it's midnight. I feel however that this behavior isn't just laziness; it's part of a larger pattern of addiction caused by constant access to distraction. The addiction to technology isn't just a personal failing, it's a shared generational struggle. To break free from it, we need more empathy, and guidance, not judgment.

While technology has revolutionized the way we live, learn, and connect, it has also created a landscape where constant distraction is normal. The widespread accessibility of technology has not only transformed the way we live and communicate but has also created a culture of constant distraction and dependency. Through the insights of Sam Anderson, Kaia Anderson, and Myli Petrocci, it becomes clear that digital technology has grown beyond a helpful tool and has become a source of addiction that rewires how we think, interact, and function. As someone who has grown up in this digital world, I've seen firsthand how these distractions impact focus and behavior. The easy accessibility of technology, especially for younger generations, has contributed to shortened attention spans, decreased productivity, and a growing dependence on instant gratification and the normalization of quick bursts of stimulation and endless connectivity has led to a reliance on digital devices creates an addiction.

Works Cited

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