

Tech Generation Losing Focus due to iOverload

-Danny Plunkett

When you think of the new technologies of the 21st century, your mind probably makes a bee-line to personal hand-held devices such as music players, tablets, and, of course, cell phones. In a society where it is vital to have the latest piece of technology, the cell phone market has exploded. Almost everyone now owns a portable phone, and it is considered strange and “old-fashioned” for a person not to have one.

You might be thinking: “but cell phones are so convenient! I could never live without mine.” Well very soon you may feel differently, because cell phones are ruining everything. They remove personal interactions from your life, make you obnoxiously accountable, and distract you constantly.

If you are a young person in today’s world, you have a cell phone, and ironically you use it to avoid talking to anyone. Two new innovations in communication have severely reduced our ability to talk to one another: texting and voice-mail. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to find out how someone was doing or make plans, you just gave them a call and had a conversation. Nowadays, it is considered more convenient and easy to use text messaging. Teenagers (myself included) text constantly and never actually call anyone in person. Texting is quick – though not as quick as a call and it is relatively free of any personal exchange. You can wait to respond to a text or wait to read it. It’s flexible.

Voicemail is the second culprit. People are so scared to talk to someone they just “let it go to voicemail.” We all do it. Cell phones have effectively eliminated the need to talk to people in a live setting and “phone tag” is now commonplace. You and your friends can throw voice messages back and forth without a second thought, never once talking to each other. Your cell phone makes you more social... but impairs your social skills.

Another byproduct of the cell phone craze is that everyone expects everyone else to be accessible during every second of every day. In the days of yore, when my parents were young, you called a friend’s house, talked to their mom or dad if they were not home, and had them call you

back when they were available. If someone wants to reach you now, they send you a text. If you don't text them back within a minute, they call your phone, and if you don't pick up, they text you again. Then they leave you a voicemail – maybe. Ten minutes later when you get out of the shower and look at your phone, you have a text saying “sry i couldnt reach u so we left w/o u.” You would be hard pressed to find someone who calls their friend's house anymore. Cell phones have made our lives too fastpaced to even wait for a return phone call. In addition kids must call or text their parents with updates constantly if they are out with friends, and adults always carry their phones around with them so they are available for their children or for their colleagues. You are considered irresponsible if you can't be reached at all times, and this outlook needs to be changed. Worst of all, cell phones are a constant distraction, and because of them you can never truly give your whole attention to anything. Smart phones are the worst offenders, since they continually divert you with emails, games, notifications and a myriad of other applications. Even if you don't have a smart phone it is still an issue. While writing this essay I have checked my phone next to me about twenty times, merely from habit. Cell phones take away your focus from everything: driving, meetings, homework, meals, etcetera. Some people feel stressed when they are away from their phones for just a few minutes because they think they might have missed something important. This creates a tense, high-strung generation that is less efficient and entirely dependent on cell phones to survive. You may argue that the convenience of a portable phone outweighs its downsides, but that is simply not true. Humans lived without cell phones for years and functioned perfectly well. We would be better off getting rid of them altogether so that we could simplify our lives and exist in a happier state. Cell phones only created stressed-out, distracted people and you would be more independent without one. They have permeated just about every level of our daily life and it's time that we stopped relying upon them so heavily!