**The Internet: Two Sides of the Same Coin**

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The internet is vast and has opened so many doors for everyone that uses it. Despite this, it has also created problems as these doors are being opened. Many of the people who have worked for popular companies like Google, Facebook, and Instagram have offered insight into some of these problems, as shown in “The Social Dilemma”. Most of the problems that are caused by the internet and social media affect teenagers, but it also affects the adults that use it. So, it is easy to infer that the Internet and social media, used by everyone, have hidden risks that include reduced productivity, negative effects on mental health, and damage to the body itself. Even though there are plenty of hidden risks, there are also many enjoyable features of the internet and social media platforms. The Internet has some advantageous effects that tend to be put aside due to the problems that have been overblown sometimes. It has helped to connect families again and keep them connected through social media and video chatting, connect future couples through dating sites, and has offered everybody some inspiring opportunities, like jobs. So, there are some benefits, but there is also a dark side to the internet.

Nicholas Carr mentions that the internet has such a broad range of information, that people are led to keep up with it, and “this promotes a sort of compulsive behavior in which we are constantly checking our smartphones,” (Epipheo, 2013). Due to this, people are always

distracted and are constantly facing countless interruptions, just from a smartphone. This, in turn, leads to reduced productivity, in school and at work. Teachers have decided to restrict the use of devices in their classroom to enhance connections and the students’ concentration. The restriction of devices is more prevalent in school environments than they are in work environments, and there is not much to suggest that there are studies being done in the workplace to see how this is also affecting adults. Devices like computers are often used for lecture notes or other class activities, but trends are showing that students who take computerized notes tend to do worse on future quizzes or tests than those who use handwritten notes. Even though this is the case, A lot of teachers nowadays have relocated to online assignments, quizzes, tests, and exams. Many teachers now rely solely on technology for class, and it is increasingly less common to see assignments done on paper. Even though schools may want to ban devices, they are unfortunately necessary to do what is needed in the classroom, more commonly in middle school and high school.

Reduced productivity in the classroom and workplace is a problem, but mental health could be considered even more of a risk than a loss of productivity. “Researchers are still learning more about how technology affects kids, but some early studies of heavy tech users show potential links to a rise in teen suicide rates, addiction, anxiety, and loss of social skills.” (“Silicon Valley parents increasingly limit their kids’ screen time, 2018). Addiction is very risky, because you are only living your life through a screen, rather than really going out and getting a full experience. Addiction can destroy relationships as well if the addiction is strong enough. It could destroy friendships, a romantic relationship, and even family ties. The only effective way to cure a technology addiction is through self-awareness and restriction, and intervention if

needed. There is not a medication to help with technology addiction, so preventing addiction can only be achieved through self-awareness.

Suicide is another big problem that has unfortunately also resurfaced as a common occurrence as well. One common example is bullying and cyberbullying. Back then, you only had to put up with bullying in school, and while that still should not have been occurring, now kids have that following them around just sitting in their pocket. Through the internet and social media, cyberbullying has been one of the biggest problems that have arisen, since it can happen at any time of the day. Many teens are being attacked day in and day out, and they get so overwhelmed that they take extreme measures and decide to end their own life. As soon as suicide becomes a common occurrence for many people, it keeps extending to other people, so that a lot of people now know someone or have been close to someone that decided to take their own life. These suicide rate increases could also be benefited by a limit on social media, by parents, or by yourself: this also correlates to self-awareness. There was also reported to be an increase in anxiety, and from that, it can be inferred that there was also an increase in depression. Anxiety and Depression are the most common mental health disorders, so if there is an increase in these two disorders, then it can be surmised that social media is having a negative impact on the mental health of most people who use social media. These can be treated through medications, but they can also be assuaged through self-awareness, and stepping back for a while to focus on something other than the internet or social media. So social media can be used beneficially if you hold that sense of self-awareness, and you can prevent yourself from having any of these mental health-related issues.

Additionally, aside from mental health, it can also physically affect you. “People spend an average of 4.7 hours a day looking at their phone. This, combined with the length of time spent in front of computers has led to an increase in the prevalence of myopia, or nearsightedness, in North America.” (Brown, 2016). Today, it is estimated that about fifty percent of the North American population experience nearsightedness, and totals to between eighty and ninety percent of certain countries in Asia. Scientists have also apparently coined a new term called “Nomophobia - the fear or anxiety of being without your phone.” (Brown). Certain functions on your phone can also boost or interrupt transmission waves and rhythms occurring in your brain. For example, your sleep patterns can be disrupted and altered just from having it around you when you sleep “diminishing the time spent in deep sleep, which is linked to the development of diabetes, cancer, and obesity.” (Brown). So, though the alteration in function is not entirely positive nor negative, it is still undeniably affecting our bodies.

So even though the outcomes seem to weigh more negatively than positively, that is by no means a reason to completely stop using social media or the internet. It goes back to that correlation to self-awareness, and many of the mental health problems can be prevented. Less screen time and keeping your phone away from you at night can help to cushion the effects technology has on your body, which cannot really be prevented. Social media has its hidden risks, like mental health problems and physical alterations, but this makes it even more important to use it in moderation. So altogether people can take control to utilize social media in the best way possible to miss all the negative effects without missing the joys of life.

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