

The Role of Technology's Effect on Happiness

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Taking a walk in the park used to be a leisurely time for all ages to enjoy the sunshine, get exercise, and talk with friends or family members. However, if one was to picture this scene twenty years ago compared to today, they would be envisioning two totally different scenes. Twenty years ago, before the revolution of smartphones, the traditional image of activities would likely come to mind. Today however, although some would still be partaking in these activities, most would have their necks bent down looking at a screen. As individuals are absorbed in experiencing a virtual reality through their devices, they are missing out on the real moments of life around them. Instead of enjoying the company of a friend, family member, or even a stranger, they avoid communication by going to their screen. These devices are creating temporary pleasure for the people using them, but causing them to miss out on the moments of pure joy they could be experiencing with others around them. Although modern technology sparks short term pleasure among users, it does not lead to their overall happiness. If we rediscover how to use technology for its benefits, it will provide us with happiness, and ultimately result in human flourishing.

The revolution of personal computers in the early 1980s started the beginning of human interaction with screen based technology on a personal level (Andrews). In 1983, the “network of networks,” which is now the modern internet, was created (Andrews). Slowly, the invention of personal computers and the internet began to develop into the introduction of social media. The first true social media website, Sixdegrees.com, was developed in 1997 and at its height had 3.5 million users (Keith). These users were able to upload a profile picture, send messages, and post to people in different “degrees” of connection (Keith). In 1999, Sixdegrees.com was purchased by YouthStream Media Network for \$125 million, sparking a new era in social media networks

(Keith). Four years later, Facebook, the most popular social media network on the internet still to this day was created (Newport 1).

The internet and social media networks are a factor in the increased amount of time individual's use technology. However, alongside the development of social media networks online, was the invention of the iPhone. The mobile revolution began in 2007 when the first iPhone was created, "reshaping people's experience of the world" (Newport 4). The original iPhone was created without an App Store (Newport 4). With this, the purpose of the iPhone was to combine an iPod (a device where one can listen to music) and a phone (a device for communication with texts and calls) into one device. This invention was successful because by combining the two devices into one, the expanded features made it more efficient and convenient for users. A year after the first iPhone was released, the App Store was added as a new feature (Newport 4). The App Store provided programmers with the ability to create apps for anything and everything of interest to users (Newport 5). This enabled social media websites to also have their platforms at easy access by an app on a smartphone. Facebook was extremely popular when it was only accessible via the internet, however, once you could use Facebook on an app, more and more people began logging on. Now with 2.27 billion monthly active users and over one billion of the users only accessing the platform through their mobile devices, Facebook still is the dominate social media network (53 Incredible Facebook Statistics and Facts). With the inventions of social media, mobile devices, and merging them into one, personal interaction with technology began to increase drastically.

The purpose for the inventions of most technologies — whether the printing press or an iPhone — is that they are created to be used as a tool. These tools are created to help improve

productivity and increase efficiency (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine). “In turn, productivity growth comes from new technologies and new techniques” (Ibid). Since technological tools are created to help humans accomplish their work faster and more accurately, using them in ways that leads to these goals should be the main reason behind using the devices. For the purpose of this paper, technology is narrowed in on smartphones, “a mobile phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, Internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded applications” (Oxford Dictionary). When using technology for its original purpose, there should be an increased amount of productivity. However, using technology for entertainment purposes allows for an increase in distractions with a decrease in productivity. Technology can be used for entertainment, however overusing the entertainment aspects can bring out the negative effects of technology. Every person should decide themselves how they would like to interact with technology to determine how it may affect them (Blankson 182).

On its own technology is a powerful tool with the potential to increase our productivity and happiness (Otto 13). Due to technology being a tool, it is resourceful to us in many ways (Alter). On a personal level, technology has been able to connect people around the world. With Facetime, families who live many countries apart are able to connect with each other, having full conversations where they are able to see each other. Before these inventions, they would have to wait weeks for a letter to arrive in the mail from their family member (Alter). For businesses, social media has been able to promote companies by spreading the word about them in faster and less expensive ways than traditional forms of paid advertisement. With the many benefits of

technology and social media, each person needs to focus on using these tools in beneficial ways, while avoiding the harmful effects of technology (Blankson).

Since technology is created as a tool, in itself, it is not the problem. However, the problem is in how we use technology (Otto 13). When people first purchase a smartphone or sign up for a social media account they do not expect that soon after these decisions they may begin to spend on average, two hours a day on social media and check their smartphone eighty-five times throughout the day (Newport 6). The convenience of a smartphone is excellent, but is it worth the negative effects? The compulsive behavior of constantly checking a smartphone breaks one's attention span, stops one from focusing, and reduces one's capacity for concentration (Newport 6). Additionally, according to a study from the University of California Irvine, after quickly checking a device "it takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds" to refocus (Lastoe). However, this compulsive need to check a smartphone was not always part of our lives. People in society are used to having built in stopping points throughout their day (Alter). These stopping points are a signal that it is time to move on and do something different (Alter). Whether this stopping point is at the end of a chapter in a book, the end of a newspaper, or the end of an episode and having to wait until the next week for another, they were built into our lives without us even realizing it (Alter). As humans, we need these stopping points to prevent overuse and eventually bingeing (Alter). However, with social media's continuous scroll and Netflix's ability to start the next episode in 15 seconds, we think that "just one more episode" will not harm us.

Since it is easy to continue to use or binge on our smartphones and other screens, we have to control what to use, how long to use them, and when to use them, so they can be beneficial to

us (Otto 13). To do so, one can ask themselves: “how enriching are the apps that I am using?” (Alter). Some apps are created to be enriching and people say that they feel good when using them. These include apps for relaxation, exercise, weather, reading, education, and health (Alter). When used for such purposes, these apps allow one to grow and flourish to their full potential. However, there are also many apps that when using, people say they feel less happy including apps for dating, social networking, gaming, entertainment, news, and web browsing (Alter). One may assume that people spend more time on the apps that make them feel good compared to the apps that decrease their own happiness. However, on average, people spend about nine minutes every day on each of the “enriching” apps, while spending 27 minutes on each app that decreases their happiness daily (Alter). We spend three times longer on the apps that are decreasing our happiness (Alter). Now, why is this? On these types of apps that decrease happiness, we are not provided with a needed stopping point (Alter). Since, we are used to having these built in stopping points, we just continue to use these apps, potentially without realizing the amount of time spent on them. This overuse takes away time in our days to do something important, productive, or even a hobby (Alter).

In Adam Alter’s Ted Talk, “Why our screens make us less happy,” he shows a diagram of the average 24-hour workday. The diagram compares the years 2007, 2015, and 2017. In each year, on average, we sleep between seven to eight hours, work around eight to nine hours, commute around one to two hours, and have three hours for survival activities, which include eating and hygiene (Alter). The rest of the time left in the day (two to five hours) is for personal use (Alter). This personal time is used for hobbies, creativity, close relationships, self, and discovering the meaning to our lives (Alter). Therefore, this time is very sacred to us. However,

over the years, this time has been diminished due to an increase of screen time (Alter). In 2007, the year the first iPhone was released, just under half of this personal time was used for screens (Alter). This increased to seventy-five percent in 2015 and then all the way to ninety percent in 2017 (Alter). We are reducing our personal time throughout each day when we use screens, which ultimately is taking away our time to fully flourish and become the best version of ourselves (Alter). Since we are constantly connected to technology, do we really have ten percent of personal time? Taking a walk with headphones on, using our smartphones when waiting in line, and avoiding small talk are all small moments of personal time in our lives that can be used for thought and growth. However, glancing at our phones takes away even these small moments of essential growth. If this personal time is so important to us because it is where we can strive to our potential and experience the most happiness, why are we squandering our valuable personal time to use technology?

This technology — including smartphones, apps, and social media — causes addiction for many users (Newport 15). To psychologists, the term addiction means "a condition in which a person engages in use of a substance or in a behavior for which the rewarding effects provide a compelling incentive to repeatedly pursue the behavior despite detrimental consequences" (Newport 15). A survey by Common Sense media in 2016 presents that "50 percent of teens admitted to feeling addicted to their mobile devices... 27 percent of parents also admitted to feeling addicted" (Blankson 26). Although it may not seem like it, this addiction stems from technology itself. On a *60 Minutes* segment called "Brain Hacking," Anderson Cooper interviewed Tristan Harris, a former product manager at Google, who openly admits that the creators of these apps are making them addictive on purpose (Newport 10). While holding his

iPhone, Harris states “this thing is a slot machine... every time I check my phone, I’m playing the slot machine to see ‘What did I get?’” (Newport 10). This results in one playing an addictive game, just by using the phone itself (Newport 10). He continues by articulating how the company’s goal is to make their products more addictive, because the longer users are on the device or platform, the more money the company is able to make (Newport 10). Companies are able to make more money through the ads that are on their platforms. And, Harris even takes it a step further by expressing how “technology companies are going to try to ‘hijack’ our minds” (Newport 12).

Social media is compared to a slot machine and is becoming a new addiction that is also being compared to a drug (Newport 9). On Bill Maher’s show *Real Time*, he stated that “checking your ‘likes’ is the new smoking” (Newport 9). This addiction is raising other problems, such as social anxiety including the fear of missing out, or FOMO (Otto 24). FOMO is “anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media” (Oxford Dictionary). People who suffer with this anxiety are constantly spiraling into technology for psychological needs because when on social media they feel isolated due to their followers posting pictures with friends, however, when they are not checking social media they are afraid of missing out (Otto 24). This problem occurs because they are either on social media and distracted from productivity, flourishing, and happiness or off social media and experiencing FOMO (Parnell). When off social media, people with this anxiety, or even without it, may experience withdrawals from technology (Parnell).

Although people who experience FOMO feel the need to check social media to prevent this fear, they can begin to feel more isolated as they constantly check social media. The more

you use social media the more likely you are to feel lonely or isolated (Ali). Since social media shows everyone's life at their best and high moments, people begin to compare themselves to the online version of others. This online person that they are comparing themselves to shows only the best moments of the other person's life, while ignoring the everyday struggles this person may experience (Parnell). Therefore, this causes one to compare someone else's best moments to their own everyday struggles, which makes them feel even lower and potentially causing depression (Newport). With the comparisons on social media, there is a social currency, or value, to each person behind the account (Parnell). This value comes in the form of followers, likes, and comments, and the more you have, the more value there is (Parnell). However, the problem in this analogy is that in social media, we are the products behind the accounts (Parnell). We are tying up our self worth with these values and quantifying it for others (Parnell). People now may care more about having a high number of followers and likes, than having a smaller number of strong friendships (quantity over quality). Which, essentially is "diminishing... human connection" (Otto 3).

With human connection diminishing, so is happiness. Jean Twenge's research states that "teens who spend more time on screen activities are more likely to be unhappy, and those who spend more time on non screen activities are more likely to be happy" (Twenge 77-78). Her research expresses a direct correlation to an increased amount of screen time causing less happiness. For the terms of this paper, happiness is "the joy we feel striving after our potential" (Blankson 19). This type of happiness, eudaimonia, comes from the ancient Greeks and focuses on human flourishing (Achor). Eudaimonia brings a purpose and meaning behind happiness, because happiness with no meaning is just pleasure (Achor). With technology, we have pleasure

at our fingertips', however, we do not have happiness at our fingertips (Achor). When we engage in pleasurable activities they are enjoyable in the moment, but after a while the pleasure decreases since we are not pursuing our potential. Pleasure alone does not lead to long term happiness because it can be short term and addictive (Achor). "If happiness is just a pleasure, it becomes a trap" (Achor). However, if happiness is joy, we are able to experience happiness in the high and low moments of life, as we experience joy in activities that do not provide us with pleasure (Achor). Happiness is connected to the meaning of our lives because if happiness is disconnected from growth, our happiness stagnates (Achor). When technology is used for pleasure, as for entertainment and leisure, it disconnects us from striving to our potential (Achor). However, technology's ability to connect us is extremely beneficial, so we have to properly discover how to use this powerful tool (Otto 13).

In the twenty-first century, technology is almost impossible to avoid. Technology is everywhere and used for almost everything we do. Since this technology is "irreversible," we need to rediscover how to use it in valuable ways (Sullivan). However, it can be difficult to rediscover how to use these tools when most people surrounding us are continuing to use them in the same, potentially harmful ways. To some people, specifically teenagers, it may be "weird" to not use social media (Blakeman). Steve Blakeman writes how a teenage girl in a new relationship tries to look up her new boyfriend online, but he is nowhere to be found. She finds this odd and questions him for not having a single account on social media. For some reason, people who are not logged on to social media are "not to be trusted because they are loners who don't wish to share details of the latest sandwich they are about to eat" (Blakeman). However, these people are just keeping their private lives, private (Blakeman).

Furthermore, these people may actually have it better than the people who are logged onto social media, sharing every life decision and accomplishment. The people who lack social media accounts, are the ones who gain human interaction skills (Blakeman). Since they rarely communicate with people through the web, they spend time with people in real life. This time of human interaction enables the person to be able to read body language and human emotion, which ultimately increases their respect and integrity (Otto 3). In contrast, the people who are on guard for a notification on their smartphone, even when in a social setting, may not even try to have a deep conversation because the conversation could be interrupted by a notification on their phone at any minute (Blakeman). Sherry Turkle states that "every time you check your phone in company, what you gain is a hit of stimulation, a neurochemical shot, and what you lose is what a friend, teacher, parent, lover, or co-worker just said, meant, felt" (Turkle 40). Even though some may consider it "weird" to be off social media, the people off social media may be the ones who have it better (Blakeman). They potentially have it better because they are maintaining human interaction skills that are needed for deep connections. Social media cannot replace these connections, however should assist connections that would not be able to happen without it (Newport).

It is extremely unfortunate that technology companies are purposefully making their products addictive and in essence are fostering the negative effects of social media. Conversely, the mission of Catholic University of America's Busch School of Business is clear. Their goal is to "help the business world understand how to implement [the Catholic social doctrine] in a way that benefits the business organizations themselves, the people they employ, and society as a whole" (The Busch School Of Business). Their primary objective is to have businesses focus on

the good of society, not for the profit and success of a company. A way that companies successfully advertise their products and prove that they can help the common good, is by using the product themselves. When a potential buyer of the product sees an employee of a company using their product, they are more likely to buy the product themselves. Why is this? This strategy is successful because it displays to the buyer that the employee is confident enough in their product to use it themselves (Alter). However, it is curious when people in companies do not partake in this strategy. When the iPad was released in 2010, Steve Jobs, a co-founder of Apple, was being interviewed by a journalist for the *New York Times* (Alter). Throughout the interview, Jobs describes how the iPad was “an incredible experience” (Alter). However, towards the end of the interview the journalist assumed that Jobs’s “kids must love the iPad” (Alter). Jobs’s response to this confused the journalist as he expressed, “they haven’t used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home” (Alter). It is only natural to question why a founder of the biggest technology company in the world limits his children’s screen time (Stoller).

To put it simply, producers of screen products make the inventions addictive on purpose to maximize profit (Freed). The more time a user spends on a device or platform, the more money the company makes (Newport). Additionally, Aza Raskin states that "in order to get the next round of funding, in order to get your stock price up, the amount of time that people spend on your app has to go up,... you're going to start trying to invent new ways of getting people to stay hooked" (Andersson).

Steve Jobs was aware of this, so it was likely his intention to limit his children’s screen time because he did not want his children to be addicted to these devices and negatively impact their human dignity. The Catholic Social Teaching states that everyone is born with dignity and

has “dignity because they are created in the image and likeness of God” (Benestad 38). With this, people are then able to activate their dignity, and therefore use their dignity to varying extents. Since social media is able to connect people, it benefits humans as they are naturally social beings. However, overusing and misusing social media can lead to negative impacts on one’s human dignity and happiness. With moderation and learning how to use social media for a greater purpose, one’s human dignity can be enhanced. When an individual’s dignity is respected, they are able to flourish. Using social media in moderation allows people to have time for creative thinking, reflection, deep human interactions, and therefore brings time for human flourishing which eventually leads to one’s happiness. Since each individual is able to develop or diminish their own dignity, choosing how and how often an individual uses social media is their own responsibility (Benestad 40). However, “when individuals act beneath their dignity, they harm the life of society” (Benestad 41). If technology prevents one from engaging, or engaging less with those around them, they eventually can affect society negatively. Since the overuse and misuse of technology can potentially lead to humans harming society, it is essential to learn to use technology to enhance human dignity.

However, is technology itself harming society? The Busch School of Business focuses on enhancing human dignity. Companies that align with this mission are successful because the purpose for their business is not profit, it is for the person receiving the product. They believe that when they “focus on the person, the dollars will follow” (The Busch School of Business). As previously stated, this is not the case for many companies in the screen-based technology industry. Since the programmers of technology and social media companies are typically trying

to make their products more addictive, the vast majority of these companies are ultimately going beneath their human dignity and harming society.

To what extent is this technology harming our human dignity? According to the Compendium, “man was created by God in unity of body and soul” (Compendium 127). This unity is crucial because we are one person with our body and soul, not two separate parts. Therefore, the body of the human person cannot be separated from the person themselves because if so, they will not be united and consequently, harm their dignity. When one’s body and soul are united they have a purpose to their life, which ultimately makes them happy. Technology has taken away the meaning to one’s life, by dividing the body and soul. In addition, the human body is affected from screen addictions because excessive use of technology can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, and sleep disturbances (Signs and Symptoms of Internet or Computer Addiction). In *I Used to Be a Human Being*, Andrew Sullivan writes about how his addiction to technology changed who he was because his soul and body were not united. He states that “every minute I was engrossed in a virtual interaction I was not involved in a human encounter. Every second absorbed in some trivia was a second less for any form of reflection, or calm, or spirituality” (Sullivan). His addiction allowed technology to be the center of his life, causing him to lose the connection to himself and those around him (Sullivan). He was not formulating his own thoughts, actions, and engaging with others, which was ultimately separating his body and soul (Sullivan).

Another key aspect of a human flourishing is that we are provided with freedom. This freedom allows each individual person to fulfill their vocation (Compendium 200). With freedom comes the power of choice. So, humans are able to choose how they interact with technology,

whether it is beneficial or harmful to them. With our dignity we have freedom; however, we should not use our freedom to “distance oneself” from interacting with other humans and limit our chances to flourish as a society (Compendium 200). Humans have the freedom to use technology as they chose, however they should learn to use it to benefit human happiness. “On the other hand, freedom must also be expressed as the capacity to refuse what is morally negative, in whatever guise it may be presented” (Compendium 200). Employee’s of technology companies are studying the human brain to understand what will generate a dopamine rush within a user (Cooper). Dopamine is a neurochemical in the human brain that aids in the creation of desire and pleasure (Cooper). Programmers are studying these effects to purposefully create code that is more addictive and will cause a dopamine rush within a user, so they will indulge in the device for a longer period of time (Cooper). As a result of focusing their efforts on increasing user screen time, companies gain more advertisement revenue and profits, but are refusing what is morally correct (Freed). Fortunately, some people in the technology industry are confronting this moral issue.

Tristan Harris, a former Google employee, is just one individual who sees what is corrupt about the screen-based technology industry. He realized how technology was shaping the way their users thought and felt (Cooper). To bring attention to this problem, he wrote an 144 page presentation on this issue and argued how the distractions of technology are weakening our human connections (Cooper). Despite his efforts, after three years of not seeing change occur at Google, he quit to inform others on the negative impacts behind technology (Cooper). If the technology industry is looking to control the way users think and feel, our freedom is being violated. In a sense, we are having our emotions controlled (Cooper). So technically, we are not

fully culpable for these technology addictions, since they are purposefully designed to hook us to continue to use the devices and platforms for a longer period of time.

According to Aristotle, humans are social beings by nature (Newport 131). One “can only grow and realize his vocation in relation with others” (Compendium 149). Humans cannot flourish fully without the connections between other human beings. Meaningful relationships and positive conversations are vital to one’s well being. Human interactions are necessary for survival because they allow people to learn social skills, fit into society, and shape people into who they want to become. Technology has drastically changed the way humans connect with one another. Social media was created to allow more people to connect with each other. However, now the quantity of “followers” is being placed above the quality of deep human connections. Since the focus of social media have changed to place more of an importance on the quantity of “interactions” over quality, our social nature is being harmed. Although a connection through social media allows for easy communication to another, it takes away the aspect of physical connection which should be part of a conversation. As Sherry Turkle states, "going to technology starts to feel easier, if not better, than going to each other". The more we rely on going to each other through social media, versus in person, the more we harm our well-being and human dignity as social beings (Newport 131). Human connections are essential for flourishing because “socialization is joy” and will ultimately lead to human happiness (Otto 3).

Finally, the principle of the common good states that its primary goal is for “the good of all people and of the whole person” (Compendium 165). With this, for one to achieve fulfillment and become virtuous, it cannot be in himself alone, but has to be done in company with and for others (Compendium 165). As the Busch School of Business states, the goal of society should be

for the common good, by creating positive changes to the world through business (The Busch School of Business). However, screen-based technology companies are failing to do this. By having their goal be for users to use their products as long as possible, they are limiting an individual's personal time resulting in negative effects on the common good. The increase in amount of screen time has led to technology addictions that result in a loss of work time and depression in users (Newport). Limiting one's personal time affects the common good because we are not allowing time to connect with one another, improve our social nature, and strive to our potential, which will ultimately lead to happiness for society.

Solidarity is the “determination to commit oneself to the common good,” it is the idea that everyone is dependent on all of humanity (Compendium 193). Having social media allows anyone with a mobile device and access to the Internet to have constant connection to others around the world and disconnection from the world directly surrounding them. Although social media allows people to be connected at any time and from any location, the overuse of it needs to be regulated. The negative effects that social media brings (by causing addiction that increases anxiety and depression), introduces the idea of social media harming human happiness and the ability to flourish (Newport). However, social media allows humans to flourish in the idea of solidarity by connecting people across the world almost instantly, which could not be done before the invention of this technology. These connections are beneficial because they enable people of different backgrounds, who would not otherwise be able to connect, a chance to socialize and form relationships with one another. Each individual needs to create their own solution to stave off the pitfalls associated with disconnection so that they can create healthy dependencies on one another that will serve to help reach their personal goals.

Subsidiarity is the principle that decisions being made by a society need to be handled by the lowest competent authority level (Compendium 186). This principle explains how the people who experience the problem directly are the ones who should be able to suggest solutions to the problem. Everyone who uses technology and social media, uses it in different ways. With this people have to understand that the way to solve this issue will be different for everyone. This problem cannot be solved by restrictions made by a community, however it needs to be solved by individuals or small groups. Since every “man exists as a unique and unrepeatable being,” each person has to learn to use technology in ways that benefit themselves (Compendium 131). Every person is self-understanding, in control of their actions, and are conscious of the decisions they are making (Compendium 131). With this, each person has to reflect on how they are spending their time to decide if they want to change their relationship with technology. People need to learn to use technology to benefit the individual and society as a whole. When technology controls the individual, it is harder to find one’s happiness. However, once the individual uses technology to its benefits, human happiness will follow. By avoiding the harms and enhancing the benefits of social media, humans will be able to successfully flourish as social beings and in their own happiness.

Since each individual is self-determinate (Compendium 131), not one solution will be successful for everyone and people will go about solving this issue differently. The first step to solving this problem is to ask oneself: why am I using this technology and what do I want to get out of it? (Newport). Once the individual has decided what their purpose is for using technology, they are then able to rebuild their relationship with technology. Overall, when using these devices and platforms we should be ignoring what does not lead us to our potential and

happiness (Newport 28). If we are acting with intention as we use social media, we are using our time valuably, which will ultimately bring happiness (Newport 43). But, how do we act with intention as we use these devices? One simple reminder that will allow one to only use their smartphone in beneficial ways is to put an inspirational quote on the lock screen of their phone. For example, if the quote “towards my goals or away from my goals” was on your lockscreen, everytime you pick up your phone you are reminded to ask yourself: will what I am about to do on my phone help me reach my goals? (Blankson). If not, put down your phone. This is one simple solution, however it is not always that simple and will not help everyone.

In *Digital Minimalism*, Dr. Cal Newport informs readers of his thirty day “digital declutter” process that allows one to effectively disconnect from optional technologies. After the thirty days, one is then able to consciously decide what they would like to continue using and how they want to use it for its benefits (Newport 60). Newport provides the reader with guidelines and suggestions on how to go about the declutter process. As the iPhone was originally created without an App Store, the purpose of the smartphone was for the convenience of combining the iPod and phone into one device (Newport 4). With this Newport suggests to “dumb down your smartphone” (Newport 242). By deleting all apps that negatively affect our happiness (including social media, games, entertainment, or dating apps), one can use their smartphone for its original purpose by only using it for calls and texts (Newport 225). Newport recommends to delete social media from your phone (Newport 222). Deleting social media from one’s phone does not mean to delete the accounts fully, but to eliminate the constant and easy access to it, while still being able to access the platforms through a computer. This approach allows one to still be connected to the online world, but reduces the number of times one goes on

their phone by only using the platforms for a purpose (Newport 222). Since Newport is aware that not everyone will be able to delete social media from their phones, he has suggestions for how to “use social media like a professional” (Newport 230). He recommends to only follow people you actually know on social media. This allows the decreased amount of time one is using social media to be of higher quality (quality over quantity!) (Newport 236).

Now, what do you do with all your newly found free time during the declutter process? Use it for an increased amount of personal time (the time to strive to your potential and fully flourish into the person you are to become)! In this newfound personal time, one can use it for solitude. Whether this is reflection in meditation or writing in a journal, having times for solitude is essential to human growth. Times of solitude and reflection enable us to have a deeper understanding of ourselves, which will cause us to strive to our potential. “The conversations we have with ourselves in the hope of greater insight about who we are and want to be” (Turkle 79). In addition to time alone, one is able to start new hobbies and other enjoyable activities. Engaging in activities that one enjoys gives rise to more happiness within themselves. And finally, this personal time can be used for real life connections with others. Since socialization brings joy, face to face conversations with others will ultimately lead one to their happiness (Otto 3). Once you disconnect from the harmful effects of technology, you are able to connect to “what really matters, ... what makes us feel nourished and grounded as human beings” (Brody).

Another solution to the overuse of technology is to build in stopping points for yourself. There are certain occasions during each day where we fill time gaps with the idle use of technology. One can learn to set aside technology during these times (Alter). This could happen during all hours of the work day or dinner time with family. Alternatively, people could do the

opposite, by establishing certain times in the day (or week) when they allow themselves to use social media. Another way to build in stopping points for oneself is by setting time limits on your phone. In the Settings app of an iPhone there is a section for Screen Time. This new feature, enables users to track how much time they use their device. In addition, users are able to set up specific time limits for any app on their device. For example, if someone wants to continue to have Instagram on his or her iPhone but wants to limit how long they use the app daily, they are able to go into Settings and set a limit on the app. After the time limit is up, you will receive a notification from the device saying that it is time to move on to do something new. Adding these time limits creates needed stopping points that can prevent overusing devices and addictions. If individuals choose to use social media and technology in moderation, they will reduce the chances of harming their own happiness and expand their own dignity.

Now that we are provided with ways to avoid misusing technology to enhance our happiness, in what other ways we can increase our happiness? When one chooses to focus on the positive, their brains receive a boost of dopamine which enables it to work better (Blankson). Dopamine is able to make one happier and have different outlooks on life (Ibid). A positive brain can lead to “31 percent higher productivity... 10 times increase in the level of engagement at work” (Ibid). Martin Seligman’s “Three Good Things” is an exercise that for one week you write down three things that went well throughout your day (Fredrickson). This exercise changes one’s thoughts from the negative parts of the day, to focus on the positive parts of the day, which ultimately decreases depression while increasing happiness. Normally, after a week of participating in this activity, people enjoy it so much that they continue to do it on their own (Fredrickson). Having a grateful mindset towards life allows one to focus on the positive and

leads to happiness (Ibid). The exercise of Three Good Things “is simple but incredibly powerful” in increasing happiness (Ibid).

As we become more conscious of what is important to us, we are able to devote more time to what really matters for our own happiness. By envisioning the world we want, we are able to be role models for others in how to use technology to its benefits (Blankson 182). “The future of happiness is directly shaped by how we interact with technology today” (Ibid).

Although mobile devices are beneficial, we need to be able to experience life on our own.

Instead of taking and posting a picture then moving on, we need to live in and experience each moment ourselves. If we are conscious and act with intention as we engage with technology, we will be able to rediscover how to use technology for its benefits and flourish as individuals.

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