

# Technology dependence decreases social skills

By Briana Ellison | The Breeze | Posted: Wednesday, April 30, 2014 10:20 pm

Cellular technology, especially that adhering to smartphones, has developed significantly since it was first introduced. Its goal was to connect distinct cultures and societies in ways that seemed impossible before, and to an extent it has succeeded. But, to a certain degree, it has also failed miserably.

This failure is most evident in a common situation experienced in dining halls across campus. Anywhere I go, at any time of day, I observe the same exact scenario. A group of friends are sitting together at their table, supposedly enjoying a meal and catching up. However, the reality of the situation is that basically everyone is on their phones. No one's talking or interacting, noses are buried in their phones, and eyes are focused solely on the bright blue screen. A similar circumstance also happens in classrooms and lecture halls. The amount of times a professor has had to call out a student for staring blankly into their lap, laughing at something on their laptop that is obviously not the lecture notes, or taking a selfie of all things is innumerable. It's frustrating to think that a lot of us are so attached to a small piece of technology that we can't put it down. A tiny phone has become the center of our being, more important than paying attention in classes that are imperative in establishing our careers.

The way in which we communicate with others is changing drastically, and not for the better. Communication is how we establish and maintain relationships. And although the onset of technology has allowed us to maintain relationships with people who may not be close to us (whether they go to a different school or live in a different state), our relationships with people in our direct social circles are suffering. When we are with a group of friends, it's almost guaranteed at least one person is holding a conversation with another individual using their cell phone. A conversation might be held in-person, but it is doubtful that everyone is paying full attention, or that it contains much depth. With a focus on conversations occurring through technology, we neglect any upkeep necessary to maintain our relationships with those physically near us.

In the bigger picture, our social skills are greatly diminishing. Now, it's important to note that not everyone is affected the same way. There are a considerable amount of people out there who are not as attached to their phones as others. Similarly, there are some people who know how to efficiently maintain several different relationships and have admirable social skills. However, the number of people like this is decreasing. Often we make friends over social media, which is all fine, until it comes time to actually interact with others in real life. The process of making friends and establishing things in common with another person is daunting and awkward. We may turn to our phones as a lifeline, but this further diminishes any interpersonal contact.

Technology may have been important in helping our world connect, but it is simultaneously responsible for the rapid loss of relationships. Our priorities have been shifted, and our attention focused on acquiring the newest version of the iPhone rather than maintaining our relationships. Although we may pride ourselves on being technologically savvy, when does this turn into technologically obsessive? Many seem unaware of the impact technology has had on our society, but its influence is seen everywhere. Tragically enough, our obsession with technology is now higher in importance than paying attention in classes directed to help us with our careers. Until we sever our dependence with technology, we may be doomed to become a society that rejects the value of social interaction.

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