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“What would we really do without cell phones and facebook?”

**What I already know about my topic:**

I know that I am part of the “digital generation.” I know I am among the first generation that has grown up with the internet and cell phones. I know that I personally use the internet and my phone all the time. I make or receive at least ten phone calls every day. I also check my facebook at least five times a day. My laptop is always hooked up to the internet and I probably spend several hours on it every day. I also know that I am not alone. I know many other college students who spend as much time texting, making phone calls, emailing, and facebooking as I do. I know I am part of a generation that is dependent on technology. For example, when we were given this assignment, and I was searching for a topic, the first thing I did was Google it. Now if that doesn't scream a technologically dependent person, I don't know what does.

But it was when I went to Google it I thought, what would I do without the internet? And even more than that, what would I do without my cell phone, email, texting and facebook? I started to think that it would be nearly impossible to give up all of those things and still live the same life I'm living now. So much of my life is completely dependent on technology; and what I want to know is: Can college students really go a week or even a day without cell phones, texting, email, and facebook? Exactly how dependent are college students on technology?

**Why I want to answer my question.**

I want to know the answer to this question basically out of curiosity. As of now, I don't think it is possible. I honestly don't believe that a college student can go without a cell phone and the internet for any extended amount of time. However, if I am wrong, and it is possible, I am curious to know how it would affect the way we live our lives. I want to know how dependent I, as well as other college students, have become on technology because it is such a big part of our lives.

### **The story of my search.**

I set out to discover just how technologically dependent college students are. I thought back to my grandparents, who always said, "I remember back before we had any of these fancy good-for-nothing gadgets...." I thought, they made it through without the technology we have today, so why are we so dependent on it? This is when I must have been crazy; because I decided that I should try to live like they did, without my favorite "good-for-nothing gadgets," just to see if I really could do it and to discover how technology really affects my life.

I decided I would go three days without my cell phone, without checking my email, without my facebook, and without the internet all together. In the days before my experiment, I noticed how often I use these things and I realized they probably affect my life in more ways than I had thought. On Sunday night, I turned off my phone, changed my facebook status one last time, and sadly unplugged my Ethernet cord. Then I ran into my very first obstacle.

Every morning, I set my alarm on my phone, and it's the only one I use. So I had to figure out how to set the alarm on my actual clock, and prayed that it would work, because I didn't want to accidentally sleep through my morning midterm. Luckily, it did work and I began my first day without technology. As I walked to class, I noticed my hand felt bare without my phone. After my classes, the first thing I wanted to do was check my facebook. Throughout the

entire day, I never knew what time it was, because I never needed a watch because I always had my cell phone. But beyond these little things, my life was quite different.

My life before now was busy and relatively stressful. But without my technology, I was bored. For the first time all semester, I actually had all my homework finished ahead of time. I knew that I spent a lot of time on the phone and facebook, but I didn't think it would add up as much as it did. I really just ran out of things to do, and for the first time in ages, I turned on the TV and just watched it for hours. This was something I never expected myself to do, I was never really a couch potato. But according to Michael Bugeja, this isn't unusual for my generation. It seems that hardly any students watch the news, but nearly all of them check their facebook. The other thing I rediscovered in my internet-free days was sleep. I went to bed earlier than I had all year. I began to enjoy relaxing in my newly found free time. However, I soon found out that this time would be used for other things.

I couldn't just become a hermit for three days. So, whenever I wanted to get in touch with someone, I had to go find them. Instead of making a call, I'd walk down to someone's room and ask the question. Instead of writing on my friends' facebook walls, I had to go see them. And for the people I couldn't just walk to, I had to write letters, actual letters (ones that require stamps). When I needed to do research, I went to the library. All of these things were far more time consuming than making a phone call or sending an email. This leads me to believe that one of the main reasons we use email and texting is for convenience. We like to have simple and easy lives and in certain cases, technology helps us to do that.

This began to make me think about the ways we communicate. In today's world, I feel that little communication happens without technology being involved. Even if people meet face-to-face, there was probably a phone call or email that initiated it. For most meetings and events,

there is most likely an email or a webpage that describes it. Businesses send out bills and statements online and can expect to receive replies within hours. Nearly all forms of communication that I can think of can most likely be linked back to a form of technology.

By the third day of my experiment, I was starting to think that giving up my favorite gadgets wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be. There were definitely some frustrations, but overall it hadn't been too bad. However, my friends and family were getting annoyed. They were frustrated when they tried to call me and it would go straight to voicemail, and people would send me emails that I wouldn't reply to. It seemed that even though I was doing okay, the people around me seemed to be extremely inconvenienced.

I was amazed at how angry people were with me that I decided not to use my phone or email. Three days is not a very long time period, and I couldn't believe how impatient people were. But then I began to think, I probably would have been frustrated too. Our generation is used to having immediate replies and answers. I think that our frequent use of email, phones, and the internet has caused some of this lack of patience. I began to think that maybe technology is the reason that we live in such a fast-paced and demanding world.

It is clear that technology has a huge impact on my life. Based on my experience, I learned a lot about technology in today's world. But I wanted to see how technology affected other college students as well. I went to the Union and observed the people around me. I noticed that nearly everyone had a cell phone in their hand or a laptop on their table. In fact, most of the people I saw had both. (In the rare case that I saw someone without a laptop or cell phone, they usually had a cup of coffee or an energy drink and a pile of books, which gave me the impression that they too had turned off their phones and laptops in an attempt to get something done.)

The longer I sat in the Union, the more obvious it was to me that I was not alone when I felt I was dependent on technology. But now I wanted to know what others had to say about it. So I surveyed some of my peers. Everyone I surveyed had a cell phone, and nearly all carried it with them at all times. Over half of them had texting and the majority of them said they send around one thousand texts a month. That is about thirty texts per day, which by my calculations is approximately a half an hour per day just spent on texting. Everyone surveyed also said they spend at least an hour on the phone everyday and a few even admitted to being on the phone for up to six hours per day. The majority of students also said that they did not use a regular alarm clock or a watch because they always have their phone with them. Nearly 75% also said they had a facebook and spent between one and two hours on it each day. I then asked why they used it and most said for fun and for keeping in touch with friends. (I also got other replies such as “for procrastination.”) Everyone surveyed agreed that their phone, email, and facebook were their main source of communication.

The more that I thought about it, the more I noticed how often and to what extent college students use technology. In every one of my classes, I saw several people pull out their phones to text. Which made me wonder, what do professors think about all of this? I know that some professors are using websites, email, and even texting to connect with their students. I also have some professors that refuse to use any of these things. Then I also considered how much college students are required to use technology. I have had numerous assignments that require online research, or power points, and group projects that require outside communication. I thought that maybe we are dependent on technology because we have to be or maybe because we are taught to be. In an email interview, Professor Morgan told me her students need to be familiar with technology in order to be successful in her classes and I know that other professors feel the same

way. According to an article in InformationWeek, technology, especially that of wireless internet, can help improve grades. So maybe in the end, technology is so integrated in our lives because it is required for success. College students today can't ignore technology because it is such a huge part of our world.

The last place I went for information was a book titled Society Online. This book looked at the ways that communication has changed because of technology. In my days without it, I agree that having access to the internet and a cell phone changes the way you live. But it surprised me on how it changed my communication with others. I thought that I would lose touch with everyone, I half expected to really become a hermit. But the truth is that I went to see people. I had more face-to-face conversations. In one way, I think I communicated better without technology. However, in Society Online, it says people who use the internet feel more connected to their friends and family than those who do not use the internet. And I agreed with this statement as well. I felt that the people whom I did not see on a regular basis were lost to me. Even with letters, the response could never be as fast as a text message, and therefore the connections are somewhat lost. In the end, I think technology is vital to communication today, but I think somewhere along the way we became more dependent on it than we need to be.

### **What I learned and failed to learn about my topic.**

First of all, I learned that if you're giving up technology you should inform your family that you will be rejecting their phone calls (otherwise your mother might start to worry...) and you should buy a watch. But in all seriousness, I learned many things about my topic that I did not expect to find. In the end, I found that without email, facebook, and phones, I would have a lot of extra time on my hands. I learned that maybe my generation is so dependent on

technology because we are required to be. I also learned that we are a very impatient group of people. We want our lives to be as easy and convenient as possible. I also realized that society doesn't really accept a person who refuses to use technology. Our world thrives on fast-paced communication.

I failed to learn a lot about technology in the classroom. I wish I would have been able to find out more. I would have like to discover whether it is helping or hindering college students and to what extent it should be used in the classroom. But I found out so much more about the society we live in and how technology is such a huge part of our culture.

Most importantly, I learned that our generation has fused communication and technology together. More often than not, we won't have one without the other. I didn't realize how much technology has helped me to stay in touch, succeed in school, and I never realized how much easier it has made my life. Communication has always been a huge part of life, and now technology is right there along with it.

So, if technology is such a big part of life, can a college student really go three days without facebook, email, and cell phones? My answer is yes. Would I recommend it? Absolutely not. Even though I had a lot of extra time on my hands, I will never give it up again. Because in those three days, I missed out on homemade candy and dinner dates and other simple things that are a part of my life and honestly, it was just hard. But I am glad that I did go through with the experiment, because I learned so many things about how technology has changed the way we live. But if nothing else, at least now when people try to tell me that I am addicted to facebook, I can say to them, "Nope, I'm not. I've gone days without it..."

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