

Is social media ruining your brain?

There seems to be concern that **social media is the “new” downfall of the brain**. The primary argument is that social media is reducing attention span along with related problems of multitasking, quality of social interactions and the ability to focus. (see infographicsee below).

The brain itself is a rather flexible system. It has a unique feature of “*neuroplasticity*” – meaning the ability to continue to form new neural networks despite advancing age as one continues to actively participate and learn new things.

Yes, it’s true that life and life experiences have speeded up as technology has been evolving at a dizzying pace. The population as a whole, however, appears to be adjusting to the changes as even Grandma and Grandpa are using their electronic readers and actively engaging in other aspects of social media.

When it comes to **attention span**, social media keeps it short. Communication is now conveyed in precise messages and visuals. After all, brains have already been primed by television commercials that went from 60 seconds to 30 seconds to 10 seconds along with quick, visual editing.

Multitasking is not a new phenomenon. Think of mothers who have been refining the art over the centuries. Even early assembly lines had multitasking features to reduce boredom.

There are those who appear to quickly master the skill, and others are still fumbling. There is concern that the quality of attention is compromised, but this will depend on circumstances. However, texting and walking can be a problem. But, once you've collided with something while using social media, lesson learned.

As for **quality of social interaction**, the network of people to communicate with has expanded exponentially. Unfortunately, some haven't gotten the hang of discretion and thinking twice before hitting the send button.

Social media is still about the old social lessons that parents try to get their kids to understand.

- Don't say anything about someone else that you wouldn't feel comfortable be said about you.
- Be careful what you say as it may come back to bite you.
- Be nice to those on the way up because you don't know you will need on the way down.

They still apply, and some people learn that lesson the hard way.

Problems with the **ability to focus** long predated social media. There has and will always be problems with distractions and interruptions. At the same time, we do have access to more information coming from a variety of sources. Scanning has become a way of shifting through. Those things that interest us are the things where we will stop and pay the most attention to.

This is not to say that social media doesn't contribute to making these problems worst for some people, but it's not ruining your brain.

There have always been things that have been **perceived threats** to the brain: comics and comic books, radio, television, vinyl records, 8-track, Sony Walkman (that was a biggie in its' day), video Pong and the list goes on.

The idea that social media will ruin the brain will eventually be replaced by a new perceived threat.

Yes, technological gadgets are addictive. And, one reason is that the brain is always attracted by the new and the different. It's curious, it likes to solve problems and it enjoys being stimulated in new and different ways.

I wouldn't worry about the demise of your brain from social media. Your brain is able to rapidly adjust to new systems of communication. You, on the other hand, may socially take longer to get over your newest tech love affair. Eventually, you'll phase it into your everyday social network of tools and your brain will continue to function just fine.

Infographic by Assisted Living Today – Assisted Living Facilities

Image: Pixabay 200795