

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.

HOW ← Social Media is RUINING our minds



Are you accustomed to receiving your news in 140 characters? Watching videos in under 10 minutes? If so you may be changing the way your brain works. Studies show that social media has a profound effect on the human mind, something we should all be aware of.

What is Being Affected by Social Media?

IT'S SURPRISING HOW MANY AREAS OF OUR LIVES ARE AFFECTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA.

Scientists are looking at:

- Multitasking
- Social Interactions
- Adding 'tools'

Just to name a few. All of these areas appear to be **continually changing** by virtue of participation.

Speeding Life Up

Much has been said about our increasing impatience, and much of it is attributed to the fact that everything is instantly available to us these days. And how much does this affect us?

Attention Span

The average attention span at present is just 8 seconds long.
Ten years ago, it was 12 minutes.

THAT'S A PRETTY DRASTIC CHANGE

- Younger people have shorter attention spans than the older.

THIS INDICATES THAT SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE AN EFFECT AS OPPOSED TO AID.

EFFECTS OF A SHORTENED ATTENTION SPAN

- 25% forget the names or details of close friends and new relations.
- 7% of people forget their own birthdays from time to time.
- People spend less time on the job.
- In the UK last year, **£2.6 billion of savings** were caused by lack of concentration.

Interruptions

Every time we start a new task, one brain has to reactivate itself.

Interruptions can be deadly to productivity, yet the Internet is designed to attract.

- The average office worker checks his email inbox 30-40 times on the job.
- Nearly once every 1.5 minutes

500,000 people join Twitter every day.

12 million Twitter users follow 64 or more Twitter accounts, and 1.5 million follow over 514 accounts.

People spend 700 billion minutes on Facebook every month.

41.6% of people access email on the mobile phone.

Facebook users install 20 million apps every day, most of which are distractions.

Heaving Our Brains

Brains are constantly changing and adapting according to our experiences. They don't simply sit there and wait for new stimuli, but instead grow new cells.

We require the senses in thinking that have been processed every day and have an effect on one of the most important organs in the body.

- A study done on competitiveness found that people who read only Wikipedia for more than those who read the integrated with video.
- Some claim social media induces a more self-centered "super" hub.
- A 2008 study of college students found that 27% of their generation can't concentrate on tasks without a social media distraction.
- Video is a popular form of social media, but it actually disrupts conversation.
- Most of college students admit that social media interruptions and distractions prevent you from fully getting through the world.
- A UCLA study showed that just a 10% increase in multitasking can change the way your brain works.
- Brain activity is seen in the prefrontal cortex and decision-making areas of the brain. From there they do not see the Internet.

SOCIAL MEDIA/INTERNET ADDICTION IS REAL

STUDENTS ASKED TO "CHECK UP" MEDIA EFFECTS ASKED ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- Phantom phone vibration
- Reaching for a phone that wasn't there
- Fidgeting and restlessness

It's All About the Hormones

Social networking has an actual chemical effect on our brains.

Dopamine, the hormone that stimulates thrill and empathy, surges when social media alerts are active.

Social networking can stimulate the same type of hormonal response as talking to friends or family.

This hormone is usually released during times of face social interactions.

These hormones also tend to help strengthen immune systems, which leads to health.

Adrenaline is released when we respond to a sudden change in environment, and social media is a series of changes, giving the body plenty of cause to send out bursts of this addictive hormone.

The effects of social media on the human brain are still not a popular research topic, but there are some interesting findings. You can discover the proof of it by looking at how your attention span has changed in the past several years. At this point, we will believe more about how the brain reacts... hopefully, if you're the one to make adjustments.

Sources:

RESEARCHER SPONSORED BY:

Assisted Living Today

Infographic by Assisted Living Today – Assisted Living Facilities

Image: Pixabay 200795