Technology: Hero or Monster?

A Sample Argumentative Research Essay

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All hours

He sits on the floor, glassy-eyed and shoulders slumped. For the seventh time, his mom called to him. "David, it's time for bed! You have school in the morning." David did not take his eyes away from the computer, however, until his mom shook his shoulder. She did not like the dark circles under his eyes, poor posture, or lack of response. In fact, she didn't remember the last time he had a friend over or went to a friend's house. Unfortunately, this scene plays out in many households because teenagers spend too much time using technology. Gaming, watching television/videos, texting, and social media have taken over. Technology destroys teenagers' lives because it negatively impacts their physical well-being, harms their academic performance, and it hinders their social lives.

Critics may disagree and argue that technology contributes many positive aspects to society. Technology enables people to "stay busy, be informed, connect with friends" (Lewis 11). Additionally, the online world can provide "kids who find it hard to make friends at school" access to "'whole communities…where they feel comfortable'" (Tarshis 17). While this may be true, the dark side of technology outweighs the benefits when not controlled or used in moderation. It has become exceedingly difficult for adults to monitor technology and guide youth in regards to healthy uses of technology. Teenagers do not understand the consequences and permanency of their online actions, nor do they understand the long-term impacts it will have on their lives.

The first area in which technology negatively impacts teenagers relates to their physical health. Excessive screen time correlates with teenage depression and obesity (Lewis 11). Furthermore, many choose technology over sleep and lack of sleep has serious consequences. According to research, "nighttime technology use only adds to the struggle to get teens sufficient rest... 20% of teens are texting and 17% are making calls between 12am-3am. 20% are awoken in the middle of the night from an incoming text at some time, 9% several times per week, and 3% every night (van den Bulck, 2003, 2007). If you add up the hours of lost sleep over the week, the result is staggering!" (Wolok). This lack of sleep not only impacts teenagers' bodies, it also impacts their academic success.

School success is more likely to occur when students are well-rested. Students who spend the majority of their free time on electronic devices are more likely to do poorly in school (Lewis 11). If students are tired, they will not pay attention to instructions, they will not learn new information/skills, and they might fall asleep in class. Shorter attention spans and missing out on important dates, information, and opportunities undoubtedly destroy the chance for academic success. Sleepiness can also cause crankiness, which damages relationships.

Not only does sleep hinder social interactions, so does excessive technology use. Teenagers have a lack of social skills as a result of fewer face-to-face interactions, which interferes with normal relationships. This means students who do not know how to properly socialize are more likely to struggle with eye contact, conversational skills, maintaining relationships, and recognizing subtle (non-verbal) emotional signals (Tarshis 17). Additionally, technology users are more likely to encounter cruelty from people who hide behind the screen and the appearance of anonymity…or they are more likely to act maliciously toward others. Many people "act differently on Facebook (or other social media) than they do in person" (Tarshis 17). As evidenced in the cartoon below, people struggle to develop the necessary skills to positively interact with others when they become too reliant on technology.
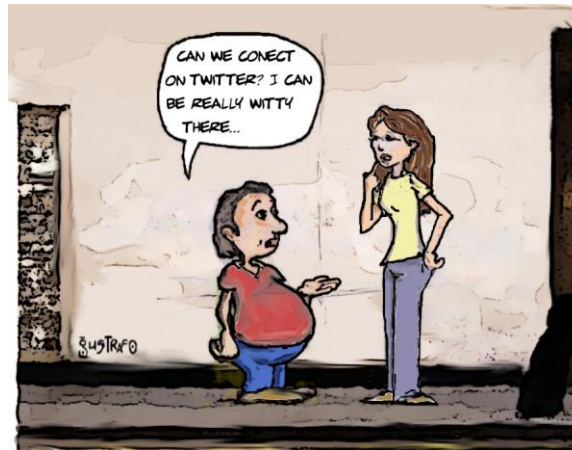
While technology can be amazing, it also has many drawbacks. In fact, these drawbacks outweigh the benefits, particularly for teenagers. Technology use is a detriment to physical health, it harms academic success, and it impedes social development. For many, technology is a drug; they are addicted and do not even realize it. In an attempt to combat these negative aspects, many adults try to limit technology usage, particularly at school and home. Some organizations even provide workshops for healthy use of technology and many schools and law enforcement offices carry stricter consequences for those who do not use it respectfully (Tarshis 18). If teenagers do not learn a healthy balance and to use technology positively, the future is a grim place where social, academic and physical health is in jeopardy.