**TECHNOLOGY**

**HOW TECHNOLOGY CONTRIBUTES TO MAKING OUR ATTENTION SPAN SHORTER.**

Attention span is defined as the amount of time a person can concentrate on a task without losing focus or getting distracted. This is a representation of the amount of time in which the person is able to maintain attention on a particular activity, whether it is reading a book, watching a play or even engaging in a conversation.

Getting distracted is normal. Acquiring focus generally depends on the amount of sleep someone gets the night before they get interested in the task they are about to pursue. Mixing anxieties can be a result of the tendencies in contemporary life according to Sibley. A lot of people prefer working in a cool and quiet environment with minimal disturbances so that they can concentrate other than working in a room with music and a lot of activities. Social stressors such as continuous phone temptations, the internet and social media are the main reasons for distractibility.

The endless flow of information and notifications on screened devices presents the sole problem of distractions. The internet has a way of controlling how human beings think and resonate amongst themselves, so it is close to no surprise that human beings are drawn to it. Human brains always yearn for a little or more social assembly, novelty and excitement whereas devices give them that satisfaction. Receiving a notification on the screen offers a small sensation hence forming a sense of winning that makes you keep anticipating more

Breaking off a task to check a notification on your phone shifts your brain gears therefore losing focus and having to move to a new task. The progression is negatively affected together with the overall speed reduction. Brown says that “the more you engage in task switching, the more your brain wants to wander and look for that new thing”. In simpler words, when your brain gets used to frequent diversions and that gets to be a habit, you may find yourself unconsciously glancing at your phone even with no notifications

Gloria Mark, an informatics professor at the University of California, Irvine and the writer of Attention Span did research that says that we are giving into digitalization more and more. In the early 2000s, her team concluded that human beings shifted their attention to devices every two and a half minutes but the number later came down to forty-seven seconds.

There is research by the American Journal of Preventative Medicine about how people with a lot of usage of technology and social media experience social seclusion. Dr. Jean Twenge further says that there has been growth in suicidal cases, depression and self-harm among American youths because of the drastic use of technology. Frequent use of devices for the least amount of time can make us increase dependency therefore altering our attention span negatively.

By referring to technology, is not entirely based on social media. People can perform multiple tasks while using technology. Most people can scroll through their notes while standing in line to get to their exam rooms. It however is disadvantageous to the extent of reducing our attention span. The frequent notifications on the device are enough to distract a person from their initial tasks. Smartphones and any digital device can produce constant distractions through phone calls, emails, messages, and various social media apps. This therefore leads to frequent switching of tasks and difficulty in maintaining a constant focus. People have come to the realization that a decrease in their attention is not a great trait therefore have come up with a plan to practice technology and social media detox. This is by avoiding any social media and social applications for a while until it becomes a habit.

Using mobile devices constantly has come up with a new syndrome in the edge of image basically known as phantom vibration syndrome. The syndrome makes people get hallucinations that their phones or devices are vibrating while in a real sense they are not. The brain gets confused and the reduced attention span in the end makes us frequently check our phones for any notifications, therefore causing a lot of stress and anxiety.

Research that was led by Microsoft Canada about how the attention span has reduced over the years since the year two thousand discovered that a person’s attention has reduced to eight seconds from twelve seconds. This study was performed among two thousand youths in Canada by monitoring their brain activity with the assistance of an electroencephalogram. There was a rapid spread of acquiring mobile phones in the year 2000. These devices were able to send, receive and connect people immediately across all borders.

Dopamine influence and immediate gratification contribute also to a decrease in concentration levels and tolerance. Social media likes and shares on posts communicate immediate feedback to the brain which as a result releases dopamine in the brain. This instant gratification can either affect a person negatively or positively depending on the outcome. This cycle that is driven by dopamine contributes to lower tolerance for longer attention spans.

Teachers and educators face the difficult task of delivering their objectives ineffectively due to reduced concentration span among learners. Minimal engagement throughout a lesson makes it harder for them to deliver content as it is supposed to be. They are required to find alternative ways to engage with them maintain their attention and distract them from external incentives or even technology. Reduced attention span has rendered students to acquire very small amounts of information that might be of help to them and hinder critical and deeper understanding of compound subjects. Educators opt to use diverse methods of learning to make sure every student understands the concept.

Certainly, there are potential ways that can be used to mitigate the negative impact of technology on attention span. Limiting the time you use on your screens is one of them. Dividing the time used on screen, some of the time may be used for educational purposes while the other half can be used for entertainment. This encourages discipline and a person can gain positively on their screen time. Incorporating mindfulness and meditation techniques also helps to channel your focus effectively and for longer periods. This encourages control of attention on tasks and also reduces the possibility of getting distracted. Apply short and structured breaks during learning sessions and while performing tasks. These short breaks reduce fatigue and great rejuvenated energy afterward.

While learning, it is also advisable to include active learning activities that involve group works, movements and practical lessons which helps to maintain attention and most of what is taught becomes easy to remember. Dedicated and continuous attention or focus on study or work also is an important role to apply to improve concentration. (Doebel & Zelazo, 2013) Working or studying in technology-free areas can create an automatic detox of technology. Training yourself to work in such areas gives you a chance to understand the importance of responsible use of screen time and technology. Reading books that require constant attention helps frustrate the impact of short-form digital content. Getting a parent involved in discussions about how much time their children spend on the screens can also support technology detoxification. (Krishnan et al., 2013)

Implementing these strategies can assist in forming a great environment therefore developing better focus and increasing the amount of attention therefore having the ability to balance between the digital world and also concentrate on the tasks given.

In conclusion, technology has been described as a great contribution to the decrease of attention spans in many ways. The occurrence of short-form content, frequent flow of notifications, and the feeling of allure that comes with any digital device have taken part in shaping the rapid consumption of information. This culture has proven to yield more shortcuts in making decisions or performing tasks other than going through it the right way and focusing on it even deeper. Moreover, reward systems appear to be more of dopamine which stresses seeking immediate short-term desire and satisfaction putting people at a point where they prefer quick rewarding content. (Petrillo, 2021). These become challenging to maintain attention for long periods of time and finally have a negative impact on retaining information, mental abilities, and reduced educational outcomes.

Educators in the end are the most affected group of people while trying to engage with students for long periods. Students have acquired a tendency to get distracted easily once they find the information complex or the period too prolonged. The addictive nature of technology, connected with the capacity to rewire the brain, complicates the efforts used to assist in maintaining focus over long periods without an external distraction. While technology puts across offers many benefits, it is important to use it positively to shape your attention span. It’s essential to balance the amount of screen time one acquires and set strategies to use technology to your advantage. Fostering environments that are conducive to sustained attention can help navigate through the negative impact of technology on society. All these can allow people to reacquire their ability to have a continuous amount of attention on a task when necessary.

**References**

[Dr. Jean Twenge](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1176/appi.prcp.20190015) {2020} *increase in suicide cases among American youths.*

Biba Betteridge, William Chien, Ellen Hazels and Julianna Simone {September 5 2023} [*Psychology & Neuroscience*](https://www.oxjournal.org/category/psychology-neuroscience/)

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Stress in America: Coping with Change – Part 2* [Brochure]. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2017/technology-social-media.pdf>

Faraone, S. V. & Larsson, H. (2019). Genetics of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Molecular Psychiatry*, *24*(4), 562–575. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-018-0070-0>

Korte, M. (2020). The impact of the digital revolution on human brain and behavior: where do we stand? *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, *22*(2), 101–111. <https://doi.org/10.31887/DCNS.2020.22.2/mkorte>