

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Identify diverse relationships with small and large screens in our lives.
2. Assess the degrees of individual autonomy, freedom and joy one experiences in those relationships.
3. Continue the inquiry into what actions we can take to decrease the negative effects of digital connectivity in our lives, especially effects on our personal conversations and public discourse.

When left to our own digital devices we may overlook or deliberately avoid issues of autonomy, time management, and self-control. Illusions of intimacy, urgency, veracity, and relevance can skew our perceptions and influence our beliefs about the importance, use and control of these devices.

Taking our cue from Philosopher's Cafe and the technique of shared appreciative inquiry, participants will explore our relationships with our various screens—phones, pads, tablets, e-readers, and computers. To what degree do we control our digital devices? To what extent are we compulsively in thrall to them? What have we gained by adopting these screen technologies? Have we lost anything of value in our use of these new tools and modes of communication?



Literature References

1. Powers, William. 2010. *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age*. New York: Harper Perennial.
2. Mistry, Niraj & Macri, Rosanna. 2012 To friend, or not to friend, that is the question...or is it? *CMAJ*. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.120838.
2. Carr, Nicholas. 2010. *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains—The Shallows*. New York: Norton.
3. Collier, R. 2012. Professionalism: Social media mishaps. <http://www.cmaj.ca/content/184/12/E627>.
3. Prensky, M. 2001. Digital natives, digital immigrants: a new way to look at ourselves and our kids. *On the horizon* 2001;9:1-6. Available: www.marcprensky.com.
4. Turkle, Sherry. 2011. *Alone Together—Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.
5. Topol, Eric. 2012. *The Creative Destruction of Medicine—How the digital revolution will create better health care*. New York: Basic Books.

Why are we having this conversation?

We live with a surplus of information and a deficit of discernment.

Richard Gunderman (2012)

Contrary to common belief even among the educated, Huxley [in *Brave New World*] and Orwell [in *1984*] did not prophesy the same thing. Orwell warns that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley's vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy. As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions."

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death—Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985)

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

Some people say, “Give the customer what they want.” But that’s not my approach. Our job is to figure out what they’re going to want before they do. I think Henry Ford once said, “If I asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me, ‘A faster horse!’” People don’t know what they want until you show it to them. That’s why I never rely on market research. Our task is to read things that are not yet on the page.

Steve Jobs, quoted in *Steve Jobs*, Walter Isaacson (2011)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

Whose Life Is It Anyway? is a play by [Brian Clark](#) adapted from his 1972 [television play](#) of the same title, which starred [Ian McShane](#). The stage version was premièred at the [Mermaid Theatre](#) in London's [West End](#) in 1978 starring [Tom Conti](#) as Ken.

*

Set in a hospital room, the action revolves around Ken Harrison, a [sculptor](#) by profession, who was [paralysed](#) from the neck down ([quadriplegia](#)) in a car accident and is determined to be allowed to die. Clark presents arguments both in favour of and opposing [euthanasia](#) and to what extent government should be allowed to interfere in the life of a private citizen. In portraying Ken as an intelligent man with a useless body, he leaves the audience with conflicting feelings about his desire to end his life.

Wikipedia

Media time adds up

I'm just staying home tonight
[Getting lost in that hopeless little screen...](#)

[Leonard Cohen, Democracy, *The Future* \(1992\)](#)

Today’s young people [8-18] live media-saturated lives. They spend nearly 6 1/2 hours per day (6:21) using media, during which time they are exposed to more than 8 1/2 hours per day (8:33) of media messages, a result of the fact that a quarter of the time (26%) that kids use media, they use two or more media simultaneously (e.g., reading while watching TV; a phenomenon we call media multitasking)...

*

When the proportion of time each young person spends with each medium is calculated, the typical U.S. 8- to 18-year-old spends 45% of all leisure time with **screen media** (35% with TV and 13% with videos, DVDs, and movies), 22% of media time with **audio media** (radio, tapes, CDs, and MP3s), 11% with **print media** (newspapers, magazines, and books), 11% with **computers**, and 9% with **video games**.

Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds, A Kaiser Family Foundation Study (2005)

As the uses of the Internet have proliferated, the time we devote to the medium has grown apace, even as speedier connections have allowed us to do more during every minute we’re logged on...If you consider only those adults with Internet access [in contrast to the “average North American adult], online hours jump considerably to more than seventeen a week.

*

...By the beginning of 2009, the average American cell phone user was sending or receiving nearly 400 texts a month, more than a fourfold increase from 2006.

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

*

...The hours we spend in front of the tube rose another two percent between 2008 and 2009, reaching 153 hours a month, the highest level since Nielsen [Nielsen Company media-tracking survey] began collecting data in the 1950s. [The federal regulator, CRTC, says on a weekly basis, Canadians watched an average of 28.5 hours of television, up from 28 hours in 2010]. VH

Nicholas Carr, *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains—The Shallows* (2010)

Last year, the National Trust released a report noting that fewer than one in 10 children regularly play in wild spaces now, compared with 50% a generation ago; another study estimated that by the age of seven, a child born today in Britain will have spent an entire year of 24-hour days looking at TV, computer and video game screens.

Libby Brooks, *The Guardian Weekly*, 1-7 March 2013, p. 48.

Nature Deficit Disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses.

R. Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (2005)

We seem to have arrived, as McLuhan said we would, at an important juncture in our intellectual and cultural history, a moment of transition between two very different modes of thinking. What we're trading away in return for the riches of the Net—and only a curmudgeon would refuse to see the riches—is what Karp calls “our old linear thought process.” Calm, focused, undistracted, the linear mind is being pushed aside by a new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster, the better.

Nicholas Carr, *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains—The Shallows* (2010)

When you die, will you die regretting you'd not spent quite enough time sitting at the computer, on-line, sending e-mail, texting, checking Facebook, tweeting about someone else's life?

VH

Who can we turn to for insight?

The twentieth-century philosopher Paul Tillich once wrote that the word “loneliness” exists to express “the pain of being alone,” while “solitude” expresses “the glory of being alone.”

William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Five things we need to know about technological change:

1. We always pay a price for technology; the greater the technology, the greater the price.
2. [T]here are always winners and losers, and that the winners always try to persuade the losers that they are really winners.
3. [T]here is embedded in every great technology an epistemological, political or social prejudice...The printing press annihilated the oral tradition; telegraphy annihilated space; television has humiliated the world; the computer, perhaps, will degrade community life.
4. [T]echnological change is not additive; it is ecological, which means, it changes everything...
5. [T]echnology tends to become mythic; that is, perceived as part of the natural order of things, and therefore tends to control more of our lives than is good for us.

Neil Postman, *The New Technologies and the Human Person: Communicating the Faith in the New Millennium* (1998)

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

These technologies, of course, provide many useful functions in our life, allowing us to conduct business, read news, communicate with friends, and express our opinions with people around the globe. On a function level, they are fantastic. However, at a deeper level, as incredible as they are, they are also empty. *Empty of what?* Empty of inherent meaning, of providing us true connection or satisfaction.

Soren Gordhamer, *Wisdom 2.0: Ancient secrets for the creative & constantly connected* (2008)

Every new medium, McLuhan understood, changes us. “Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot,” he wrote. The content of a medium is just “the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind.”

Nicholas Carr, *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains—The Shallows* (2010)

The quote is from Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964)

Practical steps for the journey ahead

How can we help ensure the RDA of Vitamin S (silence, stillness, solitude, simplicity) for ourselves, students and residents, our partners and children?

VH

You can’t think your way into a new way of living, but you can live your way into a new way of thinking.

Richard Rohr, Center for Action and Contemplation

Martha and I decided to try a simple experiment, based on the traditional notion of the weekend as time apart. We would turn off the modem at bedtime Friday night and leave it off until Monday morning. Thus on Saturday and Sunday all three family computer screens would be disconnected...We agreed to stick to this plan for several months and see what happened...We called it the Internet Sabbath.

William Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Resist the urge to make calls on your cell phone while on your way to and from work or on your way to appointments. Allow yourself this time to just be with yourself, with nature, and the world around you.



Download a “mindfulness bell” onto your computer and program it to sound every fifteen minutes to remind you to have a breathing break and to stretch your body to release tension. A bell can be downloaded from: www.mindfulnessdc.org/mindfulclock.html.

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Work: How to find joy and meaning in each hour of the day* (2012)

Pour préserver la beauté et la magie de cette pièce, nous n’y souhaitons pas la présence d’ordinateurs.

Merci de votre compréhension.

sign posted in La Caf  oth  que, Paris (2012)

Ironically, it seems that it is by the means of seemingly perfunctory daily rituals and routines that we enhance the personal relationships that nourish and sustain us. I read recently, in Martin Marty’s newsletter, “Context,” of a study that monitored the habits of married couples in order to determine what made for good marriages. The researchers found that only one activity seemed to make a consistent difference, in terms of the ability to maintain a stable, happy, long-lasting relationship, and that was simple affection, the embracing or kissing of one’s spouse at the beginning and the end of each workday...

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.

William Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

Paul Bosch, the author of the article reports... "Whatever you do repeatedly has the power to shape you, has the power to make you over into a different person—even if you're not totally 'engaged' in every minute!"

Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work"* (1998)

The philosophers offered all sort of answers, and a number of themes emerged. The most important was the need to strike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one...

1. Plato Principle: Distance e.g. Take a walk or a vacation without digital devices.
 2. Seneca Principle: Inner Space e.g. Let friends and family tell you what's happening.
 3. Gutenberg Principle: Technologies of Inwardness e.g. Turn off wireless to shut out distractions.
 4. Shakespeare Principle: Old Tools Ease Overload e.g. Paper, vinyl records, board games.
 5. Franklin Principle: Positive Rituals e.g. Keep certain hours of the day screen-free.
 6. Thoreau Principle: Walden Zones e.g. The quiet car on the train, the off-line cafe.
 7. McLuhan Principle: Lower the Inner Thermostat e.g. Escape the global village for your own village.
- William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

The various qualities of this new world are far too complex and broad to easily categorize, but I will attempt to gather them under the simplistic heading of the "Wired World." Certainly, few people could deny that the new technologies of the Wired World have improved life in many ways. Some of the less agreeable symptoms and features of the Wired World seem to be:

1. An obsession with speed and an accompanying impatience for all that does not move faster and faster. When we become accustomed to speed, it is natural to be impatient with slowness.
 2. A sense of overload with information and other stimulation. Our computers are not only faster but they store more and more data. The Internet offers an almost infinite amount of information, at easy access. In the face of this avalanche of facts, far more than can be excavated or digested, it becomes easier to confuse information with knowledge.
- Television screens now are subdivided to show not only the regular program but also, simultaneously, weather information, the latest values of the Dow Jones and Nasdaq indexes, and news headlines. Many people have become accustomed to performing several tasks at the same time.
3. A mounting obsession with consumption and material wealth.
 4. Accommodation to the virtual world. The artificial world of the television screen, the computer monitor, the cell phone has become so familiar that we often substitute it for real experience. Many new technologies encourage us to hold at a distance the world of immediate, face-to-face contact. Electronic mail, although very useful in some respects, is fundamentally impersonal and anonymous. The sociologist Sherry Turkle, in her book *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, discusses how people in "multi-user domains" have created entire, artificial communities in cyberspace, escaping for hours at a time the small rooms and meagre closets, the relationships or loneliness, of their real lives.
 5. Loss of silence. We have grown accustomed to a constant background of machine noise wherever we are: cars, radios, televisions, fax machines, telephones and cell phones -- buzzes, hums, beeps, clatters and whines.
 6. Loss of privacy. With many of the new communication technologies, we are, in effect, plugged-in and connected to the outer world 24 hours a day. Individuals are always accessible, always able to access. Each of us is part of a vast, public network of information, exchange, communication and business.

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013

Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD



The key, it seems to me, is awareness. Becoming aware of the choices we have. Some of those choices are visible, some are not. We must become aware of the choices. Every day, each of us decides, consciously or unconsciously, what to buy from the marketplace, what machines to have in our offices and homes, how to use those machines, when and how to communicate with the outer world, how to spend our time, what to think about.

When do we unplug the telephone? When do we take our cell phones with us and when do we leave them behind? When do we read? When do we buy a new microwave or television or automobile? When do we use the Internet? When do we go out for a quiet walk to think? Do these decisions seem petty and trivial? At stake in these hundreds of daily decisions is the survival of our inner selves. We have choices, but we must become aware of the choices.

Alan Lightman, *Prisoners of the Wired World*, 2002

http://faculty.winthrop.edu/macric/CRTW_201_current/Prisoners.pdf (accessed Dec 2013)

Humans digitizing humans is the ultimate life changer....Digital high definition of humans will shape the great inflection of medicine, producing a reflection of human beings through the unparalleled super-convergence of DNA sequencing, mobile smart phones and digital devices, wearable and embedded wireless nanosensors, the Internet, cloud computing, information systems, and social networking. Collectively the billions of bytes, bases, and pixels define each human being in four dimensions, a composite picture that transcends what any of us previously considered to be personal uniqueness.



More than three decades ago, when I graduated from medical school, there were no cell phones, no personal computers, and certainly no such thing as the Internet. No things digital—the term “digital” referred exclusively to the rectal examination.

Thirty years later, medicine continues to resist the digital revolution. In too many ways medicine is stuck with the original digital context, with its head in the wrong place. But the convergence of the digital world and medicine is inevitable, setting the stage for a radical disruption we desperately need. This has extraordinary potential for hyperinnovative means of precision in medical care and for preventive strategies we have never seen before.

Eric Topol,

The Creative Destruction of Medicine—How the digital revolution will create better health care (2012)



Thinking about connectivity is a way to think about what we mean to each other.



When we are at our best, thinking about technology brings us back to questions about what really matters.



[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)

Me and My Smartphone—Whose life is it, anyway?

UofA Anaesthesiology 2013



Vincent Hanlon, PFSP assessment MD

...I believe we have reached a point of inflection, where we can see the costs and start to take action. We will begin with very simple things. Some will seem like just reclaiming good manners. Talk to colleagues down the hall, no cell phones at dinner, on the playground, in the car, or in company. There will be more complicated things: to name only one, nascent efforts to reclaim privacy would be supported across the generations. And compassion is due to those of us—and there are many of us—who are so dependent on our devices that we cannot sit still for a funeral service or a lecture or a play. We now know that our brains are rewired every time we use a phone to search or surf or multitask. As we try to reclaim our concentration, we are literally at war with ourselves. Yet, no matter how difficult, it is time to look again toward the virtues of solitude, deliberateness, and living fully in the moment.

Sherry Turkle,

Alone Together—Why we expect more from technology and less from each other (2011)

[S]trike a healthy balance between connected and disconnected, crowd and self, the outward life and the inward one.
William Powers, *Hamlet's Blackberry—building a good life in the digital age* (2010)