

Growing Up Digital and Its Role in Finding Meaning

Growing up is a part of life that none of us can avoid, despite how much we may want to. There is a general template for our lives, telling us roughly how and when to reach certain points in our lives. Eighteen might be the age when people are considered “adults”, but when do most actually feel like adults or begin to carry themselves as such? In the past, being an adult happened when people would move out of the house and live on their own, ~~had~~ their own jobs, and maybe ~~even started~~ a family. It came down to having to look after yourself and finding your own place in the world, your purpose and your own meaning in the life that lies ahead. With the growing amounts of technology in today’s world, the lines indicating adulthood are getting blurred. It may not be hindering people from moving out of their childhood homes or from providing for themselves, but it is changing how people find meaning in their lives, and in some ways preventing people from finding it at all. When it comes to the topics of boredom and finding meaning in one’s life, the use of technology can create some issues in how we deal with these topics. ~~Although there can be advantages and disadvantages to this changing lifestyle, there are a lot of downsides to this technological addition in our lives when it comes to finding our own purposes and meanings.~~

As young people start to understand what it means to be an adult, they often look to the adult figures in their lives for guidance or advice. Often times they will seek out a parent when it comes to this. When learning about the technological influence, I interviewed my mom, Julie, on how technology has influenced her as an adult, and how it has changed what being an adult means to her. One of the first topics she chose to share her feelings on was how the use of technology has stopped a lot of people from finding their own meaning. Mostly discussing the differences between kids who are just finding their footing in the adult world and those who grew up around her when she was beginning to navigate the adult world herself. When she was younger, if her friends wanted to go out and do something, they would simply just go out and do it, learning from whatever experiences may come their way. Once they were outside of their homes, there was no way for people to contact them. No cellphones, not a single form of tracking material; if you were out, you talked to the people you were with and that was it. Sharing this about her life, she began to really delve into what it was like to grow up with this sort of freedom. They never had to worry about other people trying to connect with them since it was an idea that was never really on the table for them. Julie shared about her feelings towards the constant contact that young people, and others today, have with one another. ~~Although it is a good thing for many reasons, it has also done a fair amount of damage to the personal growth of young people. It has hindered their ability to separate themselves from the social world around them, in many ways technology has made this connection feel like a necessity to our lives.~~ She brings up some good points about how social media in particular has changed how people find

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Comment [1]: I think your thesis just needs a little bit of editing, but just how it's worded. Talking about the advantages and disadvantages, then talking about the downsides again makes it seem repetitive and sort of confusing. Maybe say: "as well as disadvantages", and then emphasize that you see more downsides, not that there's just a lot.

3 - I

Comment [2]: Maybe use this as a topic sentence and split the paragraph around this area, it seems like you're shifting to a new idea.

4 - O

meaning in their lives. Often times now young adults will look at the lives of figures whom they follow or learn about on social media, believing that the posts they see on a regular, if not day to day basis, is actually how those people live their lives. Younger generations who model their lives as such seem to forget about the messy bits of it all, the mistakes that are made and slip ups that happen in a daily life. Julie mentioned often how following someone else's life so religiously and constantly, takes away from the meaning in one's own life. As she compared these two times of young generations finding their places as adults, it was becoming clearer and clearer to me what she meant by it all. The addition of technology to the point in which we have it today, is stopping kids from going out and grabbing hold of their lives. It is stopping them from doing silly things and going on unplanned, and unshared, adventures. These experiences allow for people to have the exposure to what's around them, which plants a seed that will grow into a meaningful and shaping experience. In this podcast interview Julie also speaks to the idea of boredom. Attesting to how mixing technology with the concept of boredom is not a good recipe for finding oneself and their own purpose or meaning in life. There is so much time that is wasted because of how easy it is to go on a phone to find some form of entertainment. This is very different from the life she lived when she was a young person trying to find her purpose and place in the world. When she was younger and her and her friends were bored they would go out and find things to do, whether it was go away with friends for a weekend or go to a museum or a concert. Instead of going out and living one's life to the fullest, taking in every aspect they can, they sit behind screens and find pointless, meaningless entertainment because it is the easier choice. In the past when it has come to growing up young adults have decided what was important to them and what was not because they went out and lived in ways that helped teach them about themselves; whereas now young adults are trying to find their own meaning and purpose through the lives of others, with their eyes glued to a screen. There is so much life that passes by the young people of today without them even noticing since they cannot take any time away from looking at their screens, feeling as though they will miss more if they are without the access to their technology.

Technology has been rapidly changing how we operate as a society, whether focusing on the job market, or on the way people interact with one another. There has been so much change in the last ten or fifteen years or so, that it is easy to see where the shift to a more complex time starts to take place. To have so much information and entertainment of any kind accessible at any moment, spawns a new era for how people view themselves and how they approach aspects of their life. One situation that has been affected by the flourishing of technology is how we find meaning in our own lives. Richard Restak is the author of a piece titled, "Attention Deficit: The Brain Syndrome of Our Era", where he tells of how in this day and age people are doing so many things at once and are not able to complete tasks in a focused manner because of the technological distractions from the world around us. In our society now, it has become an unspoken understanding that we are supposed to be constantly busy and entertaining ourselves by whatever means we must. If someone has "free time", it is ingrained in us that we have to fill that time with something good and productive. A majority of people feel that if they are not

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Comment [3]: This could possibly also become a topic of a new paragraph :)

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Comment [4]: Clarify who "they" is

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Comment [5]: Maybe introduce Restak closer to where you directly start talking about him. It seemed almost out of place to bring him up there, instead of closer to using him maybe.

8 - O

constantly working that they are wasting precious time, time which they think is better spent doing anything over nothing. Since we have such an abundance of information that we can get a hold of at any time, it is very easy for people to find things to do to fill their free time with. There is, in fact, so much for people to do that they often will do too much or get carried away, sacrificing other aspects of their lives. Many people give up their sleep or time they could be spending with others, whether family or friends. What happens most often, is that people sacrifice parts of themselves in order to continue working with this information and technology. Giving up parts of who they are, or who they could be since they never take the time to learn about themselves. When we expose ourselves to so much material at once the “rapid information processing requires profound alterations in our brain. And such alterations come at a cost - a devaluation of the depth and quality of our relationships” (Restak, 378). Restak’s point about how this is affecting our relationships with others is equally as applicable to our relationship to ourselves. If people do not take the time and put in the effort to get to know themselves, then they will never be able to find their own meaning in their lives or their own purpose. Discovering both of these factors requires time and energy to be put into yourself, whether that shows in a physical way or a mental way. It is important for people to understand that by filling up all of one’s time with activities in some ways it is taking away some of the depth in which one could learn about themselves. To learn about oneself relies on the person’s ability to take time for themselves, to go and live in a fashion that is for themselves. People search for “relief from fatigue and ennui (...) in mere excitation of our nerves, as in speeding cars or emotional movies” (Restak 380). There is a constant need or pressure for stimulation, feeling as though one is missing out if they are lacking in excitement. Without these needed breaks in the busy lives people lead, the mind and body become overwhelmed and overloaded. These breaks allow individuals to take a step back and focus on what’s important, providing them with a chance to find their own purpose or meaning in their lives. People spread themselves too thin and it impairs their ability to take in the true meaning of what they are doing which affects the meaning they find in their own lives.

Being an adult is scary enough on its own, but when there are added pressures, like peer pressure, the whole idea gets harder to navigate. In the past when kids have entered the stage of adulthood, they make mistakes and learn from them without too many people knowing about it. Mistakes are part of the learning curve, it is all part of becoming a self-reliant human, sometimes things get a little bit muddy. In Bill Wasik’s work “The Mob Project”, Wasik writes of his flash mob experiments that tested how far people would take an experience that lacks a purpose or a meaning beyond the superficial value, simply because it was entertaining to them. Wasik talks about how through his experiment he was able to see how people are affected by the bandwagon effect, meaning that they follow another’s opinions or beliefs because it was a lot of other people are doing. This effect worked out well for Wasik’s experiment because without this affect the experiment would not have worked and we would not be discussing this article. When it comes to the bandwagon effect a large aspect is the idea of peer pressure. Going along with what others are doing simply because it is what’s popular in the moment. Often times this kind of behavior

Comment [6]: I like this idea, since really I never had seen Restak’s argument like this. I like that you explain this, it really helps and fits into your paper!!

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Comment [7]: Maybe you could connect this to technology more in some way. For example, maybe talk about how since you see what everyone’s doing, you want to go along with it even more or something like that.

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arises out of boredom. People are often so afraid of being bored that they will fill their time with activities or things that lack any meaning to the individual in any way. With time being used in such a fashion, it hinders the individual's ability to spend their time doing something that really could be meaningful to them. This pattern of behavior is something in which Wasik is taking advantage of in his experiment. He is even falling victim to it himself through this experiment, he started doing this simply because he was bored, and continued simply because he found it entertaining. There is no rhyme or reason behind this experiment, no greater meaning that Wasik is withholding from the audience or reader. The article by Wasik is very ironic because he is only doing this out of boredom, and he is also creating this experiment because he has seen people do similar social experiments and wanted to be a part of them, which is being a part of the bandwagon effect. Wasisk continues to have these experiment sessions because he believes that if there are enough of them, he will have more success and therefore he doesn't run the risk of being bored anymore.

Comment [8]: Maybe give Wasik's quote of creating the project because he was bored.

12 - E