

THE SMARTPHONE SCOURGE

Description

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At age 64, I never had many occasions to get a closer glimpse at frolicky â??smart phone-smitten teens.â?• I had one this morning when I sought help of two young adults for my photo shoot. The experience was both exciting and disorienting. Their continuous clatter deranged my focus and made me wonder if I could survive and get along with this incredible phone-preoccupied Gen Z.


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Both seemed hyper and talkative juggled with three phones that constantly pinged and popped out digital noise. It surprised me when I noticed how adept they were at multitasking, maneuvering multiple apps and modes, and swapping calls in a trifling gap as puny as the lull between two short breaths.

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On the two-hour drive back after the planned shoot, I felt like I was carrying a load of loose metal utensils. It was a fallout reaction thanks to their combined shrill bursts of gossiping and the loud and unending rounds of their phones ringing. It kept on and on. I couldnâ??t make out who was talking to whom, to each other, or to someone else. I hesitated to ask them what this urgent, frenzied noise was about. But respecting their animated aloofness, I restrained myself.

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I understood they were speaking to their respective buddies, but their rapid jugglery manipulating one call after another in an unending stream surprised me. They coolly kept one call on hold and yelled at someone, paused yet another incoming, frantically pressed the buttons, passed on urgent messages, and screamed instructions. It quickly became a cacophony of digital beeping and boyish, girlish sound bites. After a while, I heard a settled, muted chat. I imagined that they, whosoever I didnâ??t bother, finally had an agreement on a dinner date.

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I counted in 30 minutes that they had participated in more than a dozen separate calls and chatted so endlessly that I couldnâ??t make out who they were mingling with. The volleys of emotions that flew across dealt with an unbelievable range on an expressive spectrum, I believe, we as grownups will fall short: tantrums, anger, requests, advice, caution, finance, career, and finally, blues and blush.

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If they found a few secondsâ?? reprieve, in between, they plunged staring at their screens, waiting for the â??likesâ?? or jam on the â??retweets.â?? Whatever snacks and drinks I shared with them sat bland on their laps. In their eagerness to catch the calls and stream of messages, the appetite had no place.

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I, too, own a smartphone. I find it remarkably versatileâ??like a digital Swiss army knifeâ??full of friendly tools to assist me when I need them. But I never got addicted, and the instrument never monopolized or influenced my behavior.

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After depositing the two smartphone inseparables at their homes, I inferred their snappy attitude like this: â??The smartphone has become a modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 for todayâ??s wired Gen Z youth.â?•

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Dopamine release is pleasurable, but it does not give us a lasting feeling of satisfaction. Instead, it enslaves us, making us ask for more of whatever we did to set off the release.

I suspect that may be why the mad dependency and sheer amount of time that todayâ??s young adults spend with their phones is staggering. Perhaps for this generation, smartphones have created an alternative world that appears exciting, addictive, and unstable.

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In my half-day collaboration with the two young ones, my feelings were of one underlying worry. I donâ??t say these two well-mannered individuals are showing any damaging mental pattern. Still, I deeply felt something was missing in them, something unnatural manners of behavior patterns that wouldnâ??t augur well for them in their future. However, the fact doesnâ??t offer any comfort â?? which they are minuscule elements in a growing monstrous mass of a misled generation mediated and governed by smartphones and social media in all their waking hours.

Category

1. Places

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