

An epidemic is spreading across the nation. It has crept in and taken over unnoticed. The disease has integrated into society and has begun to degenerate quality of life. Many are suffering from a severe form of the Generation Z virus. The current teen generation is a technologically saturated generation in this 140-character or less world: all breadth and no depth.

Technology has manufactured a virtual reality. Technology was initially created to simplify life, but society has only complicated it. People have become obsessed with using technology, allowing it to have detrimental effects on their lives. Teens live life through a screen that mediates between them and reality. Everyone has a social media account these days. Sites on the internet present issues like popularity and body image. Teens confuse “follows” with friendship and “likes” with acceptance. Many strive for an unobtainable goal of an unblemished image. This infected generation walks in a fabricated world. They have lost touch with reality and, quite literally, have begun to live virtually.

Technology has ingrained the idea of instant gratification into the minds of people. If the world is capable of being at someone’s fingertips, why would they set it down? With cell phones that have the ability to be taken anywhere and used at any time, kids have grown up learning that entertainment and enjoyment can be granted automatically. The youth are glued to their computers, game consoles, and phones. Kids are growing up online leaving behind the experience of outdoor adventures, simple board games with family, and the feeling of paint squishing between their fingers. Technology affects children’s creative lifestyles. They need to find real world experience, not to live in a digital world. When living in a digital world, a person becomes reliant on technology and forgets how to function properly.

Communication is on a downward spiral, deteriorating at an alarming rate. The electronic age started in 1940, only 77 years ago. The Internet has caused a social upheaval in that incredibly short amount of time. People have too readily embraced technology and let it consume them. Young people have lots of experience interacting with technology, but a lot less with expressing themselves. One-on-one communication has become difficult, making something as simple as ordering food a daunting task. With constant and excessive use of gadgets, people can easily become isolated from the world. Whether people rely on Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, or another form of social media, most individuals are connected and dependent on technology at all times. It is good to embrace new technology, but depending on it completely without overcoming its drawbacks is harmful.

Problems always have solutions to accompany them; viruses can be fought and conquered. Self-examination and assessment is required. The source of the virus must be located before it can infect more areas. Once the virus is evaluated, recovery can begin. Breaking free from the slavery of technology starts with identifying the addiction. Most people do not even realize that they are addicted to technology. This generation is in severe need of a "digital diet." Digital dieting is the act of refraining from using technology that a person is addicted to. The more people avoid technology the easier it is to remember how enjoyable life can be without it. Technology would be much less of a problem without its cheap rates and high availability. Without them, technology could have never so effortlessly taken over the lives of so many people. If technology was harder to access, this generation would be able to experience a creative, spontaneous life that is much more fun to look back on in later years of their life. They will not care about beating their high score on a video game as much as the special day they had

with their friends at the beach. Innovation is great, but not when it hinders a creative mind or an adventurous spirit.

The current teen generation, being saturated by technology, is void of independence of thought. The harmful effects of technology are apparent in today's society. Loss of reality, spontaneity, creativity, communication, and experience are all symptoms of the virus spreading throughout the nation. The infection has become an epidemic that must be conquered, and continued prevention must take place. The Generation Z Virus can become deadly and will be inherited by posterity if actions are not taken to stop it. This generation can be saved and brought back to the surface.