Interviews for Media Use study: 11 of the 22 who filled out media diaries

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Anxiety; frustration; impatience; a general dependency on their parents throughout college; socialization without face-to-face contact; an increased feeling of laziness; time away from reading and personal interaction; a hunger for immediate gratification; technology that has become a part of their bodies.

If much or all of this sounds familiar, you must interact with young people a lot.

In a series of interviews with 11 college students at Wesley College, who filled out a general media survey along with 199 other students, these were the most common feelings expressed about the ubiquity of technology, multitasking and their dependence on media, especially as it is delivered on cell phones.

Although most of the subjects interviewed were women, they contrasted markedly with the men’s feelings of dependence and anxiety in relation to their use of cellphones.

As one woman said, “I feel funny without it because if I have to leave the phone and see 5 text messages, I feel guilty about not getting to it right away. What’s if it’s important?”

Several students said they’ve had cellphones since middle school, so being without it can be devastating, losing a part of themselves: “It’s like something’s missing, and I will do anything in my power to retrieve it….it’s like literally a piece of me is missing, like if I didn’t wear shoes today,” another woman said.

Yet another confessed: “I kind of flip out. Panic attack, anxiety.”

Another said it was “devastating. I didn’t know what to do; so upset, it’s a lifeline, and you get so attached to it because it’s so convenient.”

“It’s the worst feeling,” said another, “because you panic because you’re used to having it all the time.”

Most have their phones with them at all times, including in the bathroom and next to their pillow while they sleep.

“It’s always there,” said one. “My life is my phone. If it’s an important person, I’ll answer it while on the toilet.”

Even the few who don’t go that far and bring it into the bathroom with them, say they “don’t feel like something’s missing because it’s in the next room.”

Several of the interviewees expressed (sometimes wistfully) about what they might be doing if they didn’t have technology, especially their phones. Most said much more reading, but a minority mentioned drawing and art.

Most of the interviewees are dedicated multi-taskers, although most also say they try not to be rude with their phones, especially with adults. But among their friends, they see no problem with texting while talking to them, or texting while eating with them. As one said in terms of multi-tasking and how often she uses technology: “100 percent. I will be texting and reading on my kindle, listening to my iPod while applying for a job online.”

Most say they use Facebook or other social media at least an hour a day, although a significant minority said they were weaning themselves off of Facebook because it seemed a waste of time. Some check it as much as 6 times a day and daily spend a couple of hours on it, while others say they might check it only once or when they get notified. Use of Twitter has risen in the past couple of years, but still doesn’t rival Facebook. One man said he uses Facebook a lot on weekends, “3-5 hours: I’ll look at my notifications, likes, make comments, then you can click their name and start chatting, and before you know it it’s 4 hours later.”