

Is the Internet Damaging our Brains?

Well, some people might say, “Obviously!” However, the answer is just not that simple!



<https://forums.tapas.io/t/how-tf-do-i-draw-eye-rolling-help/35874/6>

Mr. Rao starts this article with a large claim: “I’ve said before the first 3 hours of your day can dictate how your life turns out. And this often begins with the very first thing that you decide to put in your brain. You can either start your day with junk food for the brain (the internet, distracting apps, etc) or you can start the day with healthy food for the brain (reading, meditation, journaling, exercising, etc). When you start the day with junk food for the brain, you put yourself at a self-imposed handicap that inhibits your ability to get into flow and prevents you from doing deep work. When you start the day with health food for your brain, the exact opposite happens.”

This appears to be true - and we’ve seen more and more of this type of “junk food” as the world went to being almost completely online and contactless in 2020, to today (2022 for reference), which I would say is more hybrid. We are (mostly) back to the office and out and about, but lots of meetings are on Zoom or other online collaborative software. Personally, I do like this hybrid as it’s allowed me to view more professional education for work!

Let’s talk more about “brain junk food,” as it’s named here. Rao states, “Anytime I start my day with junk food for the brain, the quality of the day goes down. I’m less happy, focused, and productive. I spend a ton of time on the internet and don’t get any real work done.” If this is what happens to a well-adjusted adult, what happens to a teenager? A child? Yikes!



”Happy Brain”



”Sad Brain”

We all should encourage and empower our patrons to take control of their time - there's so much we can do to assist patrons with digital agency. I've spoken to many adults who feel overwhelmed or even a bit scared to monitor the children in their sphere - be they their own children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or any other "kid" they see regularly. To these adults, it seems that *everything is online* now, and with school thrown into the mix, they feel like stopping a kid from using a device is akin to cutting them off from, well, everything!



I believe that the key to getting more "brain good food" and less "brain junk food" is *agency*, not necessarily *control*. To me, there's a difference between those two words; not a lot of difference, but enough to necessitate a distinction. *Control* has a bit of negative connotation, as if someone is trying to force something on or to someone else. *Agency* is more like self-control. It's empowering and assistive. It can be modeled by someone else rather than forced. This is helpful no matter what age a person is - you can demonstrate digital agency with yourself, and become a decent role model.

Of course how you model digital agency depends on the ages and maturity levels of the kids in your sphere, as well as the amount of time you might spend with them. A person who's always around *might* have more influence than someone who is not. However, we *cannot underestimate the power* of a well-timed word that makes people think!

Libraries are trusted places. I've said this a million times, but it bears repeating. We are trusted to give the right information in the right way and in the right manner. It matters! I've seen grandparents' eyes light up when I've said, "Well, this is my house. That's my network. I control it, and today we're going to go outside and play together. Let's save the Internet for when we're bored!" It gives people choices and the ability to say, "No" to the Internet. Let's face it, the Internet is *difficult to get out of*. It's a "web" in more than one way!



References: Rao, Srinivas. (2017). Starting Your Day on the Internet Is Damaging Your Brain. Republished with permission on Pocket Worthy Website:

https://getpocket.com/explore/item/starting-your-day-on-the-internet-is-damaging-your-brain?utm_source=pocket-newtab.

Happy Brain Picture: Photo by Darina Belonogova:

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/two-women-in-bodysuit-sitting-on-couch-smiling-7886426/>. Sad Brain Picture: Photo by

Pixabay: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/basket-blur-boy-child-208087/>