

« 'Social' or 'not social', that's the question ... » - support

Are Social Networks Keeping Us from Being Social ?

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Oct 28, 2016

Students typing on their laptops is common on campuses like UCLA. But could it be they're avoiding a textbook by logging on to *Facebook*?

The question is : « I'm wondering if you have ever thought, 'Am I spending too much time on these sites?' »

« Yes, I have thought that » says Jessica Donig, graduate student « I've been trying to finish my thesis for a while now and Facebook, being on the computer, it's sort of addictive. »

« There were nights where I spent the entire night customizing my page » says Herman Rosiles Rodriguez, graphic design major.

On websites like *Myspace*, you can instantly see what your friends online are doing and keep them updated on your every move. Most users know it's not a substitute for face-to-face communication but they say it's the next best thing.

« Friends are kind of scattered all around the country » says Chris Beitel, graduate student, « so it's nice to be able to keep in touch with people ».

Myspace says a quarter of all Americans use the site with 300,000 more people joining every day.

« It's a really comprehensive snapshot of what everyone that's important to you is doing at a given time » says Chris DeWolfe, co-founder of Myspace.com

Psychiatrist Dr Jerald Block treats patients who use the Internet excessively, more than 30 or 40 hours a week. Studies suggest Internet addicts number in millions.

« I think what kids and adults are doing with *Facebook* and *Myspace* is they're extending their sense of identity, their sense of self » says Block . « It's not just involving the Internet, but the computer more generally. You can be checking e-mails or playing computer games excessively.

« Not to worry » says DeWolfe, « I don't think it's a concern at all. I think it's more substitutional. People are spending less time watching television and more time on *Myspace* ».

[...] Users say they connect with more people than they otherwise would. However, some wonder if that instant information has a downside.

« It can get addicting. You start to stalk people, follow their every move » says A. Manago, graduate student, « All it takes is a click ».

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