

Is Too Much Technology Making Us Stupid?

*What are the internet and technology
doing to our brains?*

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*Principles, tools, and practices for  
saving your sanity and bringing focus  
and energy back to your life!*

## Is Too Much Technology Making Us Stupid?

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Today's world is all about speed and gathering information, superficial or otherwise. How does that affect our ability to comprehend, focus and enjoy our lives and do our work? What are the internet & technology doing to our brains? What can you do to take care of your well-being, reduce your anxiety, and bring focus and energy back to your life?

We are living in an extraordinary time, in the very infancy of the technological revolution. The breakthroughs and positive benefits of living in our 'techno-world' are wide ranging and touch every area of our lives, from communications and entertainment to science and medicine. 21<sup>st</sup> century technology is also changing our perspectives on what's possible and our potential to make a difference at home, at work, in our communities, and the world.

**We also know from our own experience that computers and technological devices, all of which are designed to make us more productive and efficient, can use us up, spit us out, and leave us feeling inferior, ineffective, frustrated and stressed out. While we can't know what the long term impact of living in a digital world will be, we can do our best to make sure we are using the technology we are inventing to support ourselves and each other in doing good work and improving our lives. We can also do our best not to trade our human connections, empathy and compassion for short term, shallow thinking; behaviors associated with too much technology and too much useless information.**

The intention of this workshop is to teach you vital principles, tools, and practices for effectively living and working in the face of too much technology, information and spiraling expectations. Adopting the teachings and principles will leave you more able to deal with the stress and anxiety associated with technology and information overload. Less stress will improve your ability to focus and be present, leaving you more productive, energized and fulfilled.



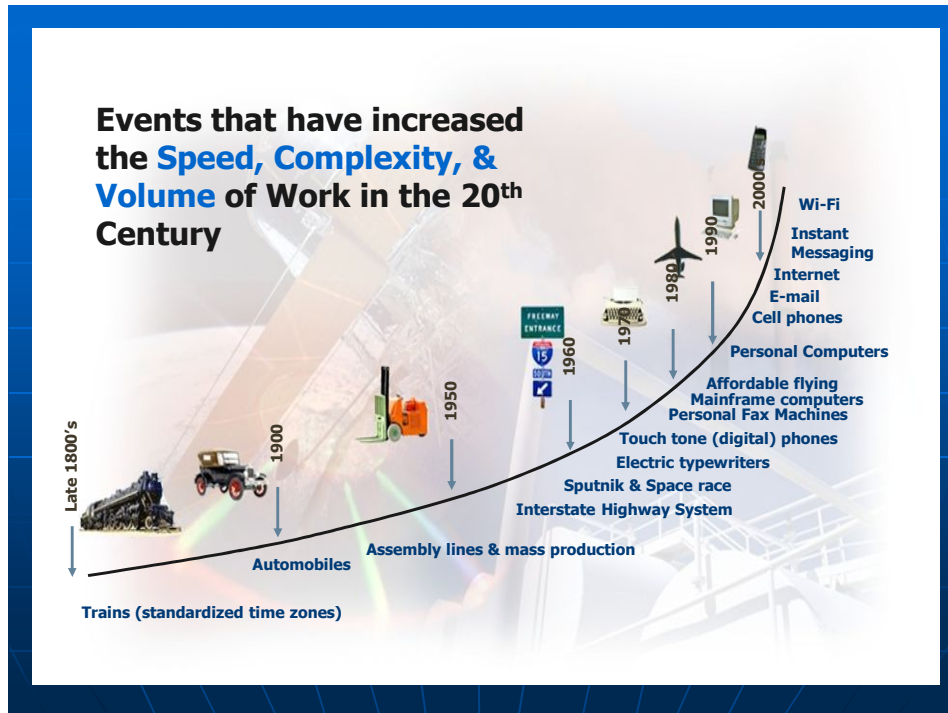
*“While we have been miraculously connecting electronically over the past 15 years, we have also quietly and unintentionally been disconnecting interpersonally.*

*Our task now is to learn how to use the technology we've invented, rather than allow it to use us, so that it improves our human connections, and does not replace them.”*

*CrazyBusy, Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.*

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Over the past twenty years there has been a dramatic explosion of technology and information. Our work environment has shifted along three lines:  
**Volume, Speed, and Complexity.**



### Inquiry

How have these changes and the new work environment impacted your performance? What is the impact of this on your productivity?

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How have you been feeling in the face all the demands & too much technology? How do you deal with the anxiety & stress?

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What is the impact on your conversations at work? What about your team or teams at work?

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What is the impact on your well being?

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**Too much technology and too much information are having an impact on our brain function, mental and spiritual well-being, and the quality of our relationships.**

Our Brains simply cannot function efficiently with too much information. Too much information causes stress -our brains secrete cortisol and adrenaline, initially boosting energy levels and augmenting memory. Over time, these hormones may impair cognition, lead to depression and alter neural circuitry that control mood and thought.

- As we spend more time with technology related tasks (emailing, computer work, web surfing, texting and tweeting) the more our brains try to adapt and become identified with computers, devices, blackberry's, laptops, and all manner of wireless gadgets.
  - How do you feel about how you are spending your time?
  - Do you ever feel more like a machine than a human being?
- Our brain circuits become weaker with less face to face contact, leading to social awkwardness, impatience, an inability to focus and interpret nonverbal messages, isolation, and less interest in traditional learning.
  - How do you use technology to avoid relating or doing what needs to be done?
  - Are you moody, depressed, or impatient much of the time?
- We are addicted to technology. Changing addictive habits requires awareness, discipline & support.
  - What are your 'techno' addictions?
  - Where do these addictions show up; at work, in meetings, with your spouse, kids, at dinner?
- Many of us feel the need to be busy 24/7 and 365 days a year. Our well being is compromised and our productivity suffers as we attempt to get more done in less time in order to keep up with increased demands.
  - Do you feel the need to be constantly busy?
  - Do you feel that others will judge you if you're not 'crazybusy', overwhelmed or stressed out? Are you starting earlier, working later in order to try and catch up?
  - Is it worth it?

**We have more productivity tools than anyone could ever have dreamed possible, and yet are really more productive? We are definitely more stressed out!**

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When you think of productivity, many of us think of **'time management'** –a tool arising from the world of accounting in the late 1950's. Productivity for many of us is simply **'getting things done'**. These definitions, although general, are the paradigms in which many of us think about what it means to be productive.

- The number of American workers who consider stress to be a major problem in their lives has more than doubled during the past ten years. 62% percent of American workers say their workload has increased over the last six months; **53% say work leaves them overtired and overwhelmed.**
- There's a disconnection between the new work environment, our traditional approaches and our 'brains capacity' to effectively deal with work and life. We think it's personal and we work longer and harder to keep up. Working longer hours is unsustainable; resulting in exhaustion, sickness, impatience, disengagement, an inability to focus, and read at length or think in depth.

### **Our definition of productivity:**

1. Knowing what to do, when to do it, and doing it.
2. Doing is what is for the highest good of all, including ourselves.

### **What do we mean by the highest good of all? Consider:**

- Should I send an email or call the person that I am avoiding because I'm fearful of their reaction.
- Should I eat this doughnut or have a piece of fruit?
- Am I selling or serving? Is my program or product the best fit for this client?
- Perhaps you find yourself doing email dispositions rather than going for a walk.
- Maybe you value religion or spiritual practices but won't commit to getting this in your schedule.

How do you use technology to avoid doing what you should be doing?

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How do you know which thing to work on?

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What determines your priorities?

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**We need to develop an integrated approach to productivity and effectiveness that is grounded in the totality of who we are, leaving us feeling empowered, energized and working on what really matters, guided by the highest good.**

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In the face of too much technology we need principles, practices and tools that support our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs. Here are some practices will help relieve stress and anxiety, increase your capacity to think clearly and qualitatively, and enhance productivity:

- Recognize and release your addiction to be constantly busy, and always on.
- Slow down, take long slow deep breaths, spend some time alone, and be quiet. Meditate consistently if you already know how or learn to meditate if you don't. More than 600 scientific studies verifying the wide-ranging benefits of the Transcendental Meditation technique alone have been conducted at 250 independent universities and medical schools in 33 countries during the past 40 years.
- Develop your 'inner coach'. When you notice you feel anxious, fearful or stressed, take a time out. It's not a punishment. It gives you the chance to reconnect to yourself and the information that the emotion is giving you.
- Be mindful and sensitive to your feelings and intuition, so that you are working on the 'right thing' and doing it well. Ask yourself, 'does it feel right to be doing this now?' Check in with trusted co-workers or family members; trust your and their intuition.
- Sort information and take action on what's most important for yourself, your family, and your work. You can do this by simply asking 'what is for the highest good in this moment? Does this feel right?'
- Clean and organize all the places that impact your productivity. Schedule time to do this in stages; don't try to do it all at once.
- Don't eat lunch at your desk.
- Take five to thirty minute 'power naps' have a huge impact on our ability to function & focus.
- Take brief but regular breaks away from your desk at 90 – 120 minute intervals
- Don't take your technology to bed.
- Reduce or eliminate caffeine, sugar and alcohol.

**We have unconscious, obsolete principles and practices that impede productivity causing us to feel stressed and overwhelmed.**

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For example; we unconsciously try to ‘**get it all done**’. There was a time when people could get it all done. Not in today’s world. It’s impossible. You may know this intellectually but you still may think you should get it all done even if you cannot.

Here’s the principle to live with:

***You will never get it all done and it doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with you!***

Your **work habits** erode your ability to focus on what’s most important, be present, and take action. In other words, the source of your anxiety is YOU, not the work. Altering your habits and addictions will transform your productivity.

### Definition of habit

1. A recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition.
2. An established disposition of the mind or character.
3. An addiction, especially to a narcotic drug.

### What are you work habits in these areas?

- Email
- Phone calls
- Meetings
- Capturing ideas
- Taking interruptions
- Procrastinating
- Multitasking
- Saying yes to everything
- Avoiding Relating
- “I’ll do it someday”
- Getting moody when you’re overwhelmed

### Inquiry

What are your structures for managing what you have to do? Do you use multiple to-do lists, post it notes, piles and files? Do you ask others to remind you of what there is to do?

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How do you manage the things you need to do in the future? What about all of the things you plan to work on someday?

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### Transform your current system for getting things done:

- Simplify by using **one or two tools** to capture ideas as they come to mind.
- Learn to set up and **use your calendar** so that it directs you to working on the most important tasks.
- **Schedule time** in your calendar for empowering, relaxing practices in order to feel connected, calm and centered.

### Dealing with distractions and interruptions:

- Become disciplined about staying focused and not paying attention to non-urgent tasks.
- When interrupted ask, is this a ‘411’ or a ‘911’?
- Learn to say “No” when you should

### Email Practices

1. Use your tools wizard to intercept and redistribute all incoming CC’s into a Not Doing Now E-mail Folder, except those from people you know you will want to read.
2. Schedule a recurring daily appointment to scan and read the E-mail that you have allowed to remain in your inbox.
3. As you are scanning your E-mail, slide anything that you cannot respond to instantly, into a Not Doing Now E-mail folder.
4. Schedule three or four Occasions per week to review process and respond to what is in your Not Doing Now E-mail folder.
5. Do not open and read E-mail except during the scheduled Occasions. **Turn off any audio or visual email pop up notifications you may have set to notify you of arriving email.**
6. Make sure you E-mail everyone with whom you have regular E-mail conversations to tell them about your daily protocol. If urgent, they should call you!

### Subject Line Examples:

DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE/Topic/Action Required

- Example: URGENT/New Brochure for Product X/Comments needed

Or, start each subject line with description of purpose of the email:

- Example: INFORM, REQUEST, ACTION REQUIRED, UPDATE

If someone is listed in the “CC” field of the email, they are not expected to take any action with the email

- **If you want someone to take an action, they must be listed in the “To” field**

At the end of the email, if you do not require a response to your email, end with “No response required.”

If you do require a response, say what response you are asking for and by when; explicitly say to whom to respond:

- Example: JOE: [By 17 December, 2010] Please respond. Do not use, “Reply to all” unless each person needs to see the response.

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### What will you take away?

Principles I will adopt and practices I will commit to in order to enhance my productivity, and reduce my anxiety and stress:

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What **support** do you need in order to follow through?

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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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**You will find free resources at:**

<http://lifeworkseducation.com/downloads/>  
[www.healthcarecollections.com](http://www.healthcarecollections.com)

**You can also reach Jerry directly: 760-918-6701 or**

[Jerry@lifeworkseducation.com](mailto:Jerry@lifeworkseducation.com)  
[Jerry@HealthcareCollections.com](mailto:Jerry@HealthcareCollections.com)

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"I used to have time to think, to reflect, my mind and I. We would sit together of an evening and listen to the inner melodies of the spirit, which one only hears in leisure moments when the words of some loved poet touch a deep, sweet chord in the soul that until now had been silent."

The Story of My Life, Helen Keller

