**Student 'Addiction' To Technology 'Similar To Drug Cravings'**

Withdrawal symptoms experienced by young people deprived of gadgets and technology is compared to those felt by drug addicts or smokers going “cold turkey”, a study has concluded.

By [Andrew Hough](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-hough/)7:30AM BST 08 Apr 2011

[Researchers found nearly](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/news/8235302/Facebook-generation-suffer-information-withdrawal-syndrome.html) four in five students had significant mental and physical distress, panic, confusion and extreme isolation when forced to unplug from technology for an entire day. They found college students at campuses across the globe admitted being “addicted” to modern technology such as mobile phones, laptops and television as well as social networking such as Facebook and Twitter.

A “clear majority" of almost 1,000 university students, interviewed at 12 campuses in 10 countries, including Britain, America and China, were unable to voluntarily avoid their gadgets for one full day, they concluded.

The University of Maryland research described students’ thoughts in vivid detail, in which they admit to cravings, anxiety attacks and depression when forced to abstain from using media. One unnamed American college student told of their overwhelming cravings, which they confessed was similar to “itching like a crackhead (crack cocaine addict)”. The study concluded that “most students… failed to go the full 24 hours without media”.

The research, titled The world Unplugged, also found students’ used “virtually the same words to describe their reactions”. These included emotions such as fretful, confused, anxious, irritable, insecure, nervous, restless, crazy, addicted, panicked, jealous, angry, lonely, dependent, depressed, jittery and paranoid.

Prof Susan Moeller, who led the research, said technology had changed the students’ relationships.

"Students talked about how scary it was, how addicted they were,” she said. "They expected the frustration. But they didn't expect to have the psychological effects, to be lonely, to be panicked, the anxiety, literally heart palpitations. “Technology provides the social network for young people today and they have spent their entire lives being ‘plugged in’.”

The study interviewed young people, aged between 17 and 23, including about 150 students from Bournemouth University, who were asked to keep a diary of their thoughts. They were told to give up their mobile phones, the internet, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and they were not allowed to watch television. They were, however, permitted to use landline telephones and read books.

The study found that one in five reported feelings of withdrawal akin to addiction while more than one in 10 admitted being left confused and feeling like a failure. Just 21 per cent said they could feel the benefits of being unplugged. One British participant reported: “I am an addict. I don’t need alcohol, cocaine or any other derailing form of social depravity... Media is my drug; without it I was lost. Another wrote: ‘I literally didn’t know what to do with myself. Going down to the kitchen to pointlessly look in the cupboards became regular routine, as did getting a drink.’ A third said: ‘I became bulimic with my media; I starved myself for a full 15 hours and then had a full-on binge.’ While a fourth student added: "I felt like a helpless man on a lonely deserted island in the big ocean”.

Prof Moeller added: “Some said they wanted to go without technology for a while but they could not as they could be ostracized by their friends. “When the students did not have their mobile phones and other gadgets, they did report that they did get into more in-depth conversations. “Quite a number reported quite a difference in conversation in terms of quality and depth as a result.”