

R. May 6/2010

"Driven to Distraction – Truth and Consequences"

An Essay by Isabella Pedersen (14 yrs old) – Grade 9 Canmore Collegiate High School

Our world is changing. Everything is moving at a fast pace, so rapidly that if one should pause for even a moment, they could get left behind with the new trends and find themselves dubbed "so yesterday". It sounds stressful, a stereotype of consumerism with no chance to 'stop and smell the roses'. An image of that burned-out office worker with the Blackberry cell phone in one hand and five cups of coffee in the other might even come to one's mind, and so you shake your head, sighing "No, no, that life's not for me, I could never deal with all that stress,".

Newer generations, however, are quite used to the fast pace. We consider it just a part of daily life to have school, chores, a daunting list of extra-curricular activities and *still* find the time to relax and hang out with friends. We've evolved to it, and scientists have even studied it and named this adaptation a part of the "Net-Generation". This generation refers to anyone born from the mid-1980's and after, and simply means that we're more capable of adjusting to new technology because we've been exposed to it from a young age. It is evident everywhere you go, from the teens chatting on IM while checking their Facebook status to the miniature laptops with colours and shapes developed for infants.

I remember being at a dinner party with some of my parent's friends, and one of them saw me listening to my iPod. He asked what I was doing, and I replied "Listening to music". With a stunned expression on his face, he asked to hold my iPod, and while twisting it in his hands, inquired "But where does the CD fit in?" Even in schools today, while our parents and grandparents were asked to bring pencils and paper, more and more modern schools ask for laptops. And with vast sources of information available to us through new technology, we should use it to the best of our advantage! If a mother in the 1930s wished to cook lasagna for supper, she would have to go to the store or library to find a recipe for it. Nowadays, a mother has a variety of options; find a recipe on the internet, ask a friend on Facebook, tweet "Who's got a recipe for lasagna?", call *her* mother for the family recipe or send a group text to her husband and kids saying "No recipes 4 lasagna, how does eating out 2nite sound?" Technology makes life that much easier... or does it?

With all these new gadgets comes a much higher chance of distraction. Many are so dependent on their technology for work, communication, research and other everyday activities that they will use it at times when they *should* be focusing on the task at hand. People will text or go on the internet while writing a report, eating food, walking on the street or even while looking after young children. The most dangerous, and sadly the most common example of this: **using technology while driving**. Driving! While we are commandeering two-ton vehicles

capable of causing extreme injury or death, half our attention is focused on *our cell phones*? This brilliant advance in the human race and in technology isn't a bad thing, but there's a fine line between using technology for our good and using it to a point where safety is at risk.

There are approximately 160,000 road crashes in Canada annually. Out of these, between 2,800 and 2,900 people are killed in the accidents. Even if driving in Canada is relatively safe compared to driving in other countries, that's still a large number of injuries thanks to car accidents. What's causing all these collisions? Statistics show that 25 to 50 per cent of all car crashes in North America are the result of distracted driving, and 35 per cent of *that* is caused by technology usage. In fact, 85 per cent of the 100 million regular cell phone users in the world drive while on their phone! Then, there are those drivers that use a laptop while driving, switch the radio station while driving, take pictures of scenery while driving, even *shave* while driving. Computers, cell phones, radio and media, cameras and electrical shavers are all very useful in everyday lives, but if they're creating disaster on the roads. It's clear that too much tech could lead to hazards.

So, how to solve a problem like this? It's not as if the government can remove all technology so that people don't use it while driving. That would cause just as much damage! Technology is inevitable in our lives, and trying to cut it out entirely and *still* go through every day like the rest of society is virtually impossible. Imagine this scenario: a driver is commuting home late at night, falls asleep at the wheel and crashes at 110 km/h into a tree. If all technology was banned, how would the driver or another driver passing by contact emergency services? Hopefully that driver had a system installed in his car to automatically call 911 when he crashed, but what if he didn't? Cell phones and other electronics can still help us in those situations.

It's all about finding a balance. Technology helps us to live and advance in knowledge and luxury, but if we become *too* dependent on it, how are we to survive in life-threatening situations? One example of this was a family in 2009 driving to meet their family for Christmas Eve. Their new GPS promised them a route that would save them 40 miles off their trip, but ended up taking them onto a snow-blocked path where they were stuck without food for 24 hours. There was a cell phone in the car as well, but no cellular service, so it was useless. The couple blames their GPS for almost taking their lives along with their baby daughter, but some think it was time for them to take out a map and manually find their way. Who's at fault, a defective machine or poor judgement of man? Well, *both*. Although the internet-connected GPS was supposed to pick up information of closed roads and bad weather, this couple could've easily seen the signs themselves.

In conclusion, I do think that motorists should be banned from using distracting devices for public safety... *sort of*. It's obvious that people are going to need cell phones, laptops, music

players, organizers and whatever else is out there for work and school, and these are going to be transported in cars, most likely. Barring people from even carrying them would be a violation of rights, and a tad drastic if you ask me. What do I say? *All hand-held electronic devices, such as cell phones, Blackberries, iPhones or iPods, laptops, music entertainment systems, cameras and PDAs (unless in use with hands-free software) are illegal for drivers to be using while driving a vehicle of any sort.* You may have the technology with you in the automobile, even be utilising it with hands-free software, but both hands need to be on the steering wheel and the driver's eyes must remain on the road. It's not too much to ask, and it's a way to reduce accidents occurring on streets and a chance to give citizens of Canada a wake-up call. Even if one has all the emergency technology available installed in a vehicle, it's more important to have a calm mind and back-up strategies in case of an accident (or a good insurance for their car should they get into a collision) to minimize the hazards and concerns while driving. Prevention, not rehabilitation.

With our modern and evolving world, it's important for society to adjust to new needs. Thirty years ago, we didn't require the laws and regulations for terrorism and safety we have now, but in return we have brilliant advances and science far beyond what we knew those 30 years ago. Our present-day culture is a beautiful thing, just as long as we know how to evolve *with* it. In the time it has taken you to read this, 2,550 children were born around the world and 1,070 passed away. A scientific discovery was made, and more than 10 million of their own discoveries were made by people everywhere. Be it a small baby spotting his reflection in the mirror, understanding that it is himself, or a college student receiving her degree in medicine and seeing that *"Yes, mother was right, it was worth it,"* or an elderly couple finally grasping their own vision of true love, humans are *learning*. We are all learning, all the time, *changing* all the time. I, in writing this essay, have learned much too, about this subject and about myself and my values. I hope that you, who have taken the time to flip through this, learned something too. It's time for our world to switch gears for driving safety. Venture safely, with purpose, and with happiness into our world!

Kalyn Cotton

From: Mah-Poy, Roger [RMah-Poy@crps.ab.ca]
Sent: May 7, 2010 08:06
To: Kalyn Cotton
Subject: FW: Morgan Schultz - AASRO Scholarship Essay [Scanned]

Attachments: Driven to Distraction Essay.doc



Driven to
Distraction Essay.do.

Hi Kalyn,

Here is another essay.

All three of my applicants are honour students Isabella Pederson, Annick Sevigny and Morgan Schulz.

Isabella is an outstanding academic grade 9 student

Annick Sevigny is a French student in financial need, grade 11

Morgan Schulz is a well rounded student who participates in sports, drama and volunteers in the community. grade 11

All are deserving students!

Best regards,

Roger Mah Poy

Career Advisor
Canmore Collegiate High School
1800-8 Ave.
Canmore AB.
T1W 1Y2

403.678.6192 Ext.3013

www.rmah-poy@crps.ab.ca

From: Morgan Schultz [mailto:morgan.schultz@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thu 06/05/2010 11:07 PM
To: Mah-Poy, Roger
Subject: Morgan Schultz - AASRO Scholarship Essay [Scanned]

Hello Mr. Mah Poy,

Thank you for your help with everything!

Morgan Schultz

One of the greatest wastes in the world is the unexploited potential of average human beings.