

Internet

Internet is one of the greatest tools we have today. Billions of bits of information, unlimited ways to connect, games to play, videos to watch, things to learn. There's something for everyone. We Facebook, tumble, stumble, and tweet more now than ever. Social media is connecting us in incredible ways. You can create communities of like-minded people that would never meet before on the Internet. But, due to this, we are spending copious amounts of time on the World Wide Web, and it's slowly changing who you are as a person.

I went for a long period of time where I didn't read a book. I finally got around to picking up a few new books and as soon as I started reading them, I struggled. I couldn't hold concentration like I used to. I would read a whole paragraph with my mind elsewhere or had this constant anxious feeling to do something else, even when there was absolutely nothing else to do. My mind would jump from one thought to another and I barely could read a chapter in one sitting. I talked to a few people about this, and I even looked to the trusty Internet for my solution. I found that I'm not alone, many people report the same type of concentration shift. The reason for this is the information overload via Internet.

We take in 34 gigabytes of information each day now. That is 5 times more than we did 20 years ago. There is so much going on in our minds that we rarely spend any time on one particular bit of information because there is always something new and more intriguing just around the corner. When we land on a webpage, we spend the average of about 50 seconds, if that, and know that there are at least 5 other links we can click on the page. We can still concentrate, but our minds would much rather be focused on a series of things, not one thought.

Not only is it altering our concentration on reading long works, but it's changing "how" we read. We no longer read; we skim. This is our way of adapting to this information overload. It would take too long to process all this information and we don't need everything. We sift through the information and get to the main point or relevant material.

The way things are written online is changing for us as well. For anyone who has written a blog post, it's a much different style of writing compared to novels and even newspaper articles. The things we read online are as clear and concise as possible. Adjectives are a thing of the past. The information is usually already condensed for you, and is separated into neat headlines that make it easy to scan the page in a few seconds. We don't focus on comprehension anymore, we know what we're looking for and we find it quickly.

The way we are reading things is just the start, the way we are thinking is changing too. Before, we had calm linear thoughts, one thing led to another. Now, our thoughts are jumping back and forth between so many things. We have one thought, which leads to four or five other non-related thoughts, and then some time later we return to the original thought. This is a direct result of our attention being focused on so many things for so little time on the web. There is always a link that can take us somewhere new and start a new train of thoughts.

We've developed a much more fluid way of thinking. And it's not a bad thing. It's making us more creative. You are much more efficient at combing and filtering through ideas, which in essence is what inspiration is. Linear thought is very organized and does not leave room for new ideas.

So, the Internet has become an essential part of our daily lives. But it's also important to disconnect for a while and to take care of your body and mind. Create a balance of time online and in the real world, so you can reap the positive cognitive abilities the Internet is giving you and avoid forming an unhealthy set of habits that will cost you later in life.

The way people read has changed because...

1. ...they don't need all the information they read about.
2. ...they lost interest in serious literature.
3. ...they had to adjust to new conditions.
4. ...they had to read faster.