

Digital Minimalism Can Help Your Friendships

Can technology and social media help you make closer friends?

Depending on who you ask, the answer is “Yes”. But I might suggest the answer is also a resounding “No”!

Sure, this statement seems strange in the era of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the plethora of social media options.

On one hand, social media is good for keeping in touch. According to Pew Research’s study *Using Social Media to Keep in Touch*, roughly two thirds (67%) of social media users say staying in touch with current friends and family members is the major reason they use social media sites. About half use it to reconnect with old friends.



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On the other hand, we frequently hear that over use of social

media is having a negative impact on brain development of our youth and is weakening our interpersonal skills to the point that it affects our friendships. As I have written previously in **Loneliness: a Huge Threat to our Health**, there is even more loneliness and isolation, especially for men.

So what's something we can do to help this epidemic? It is called "Digital Minimalism".

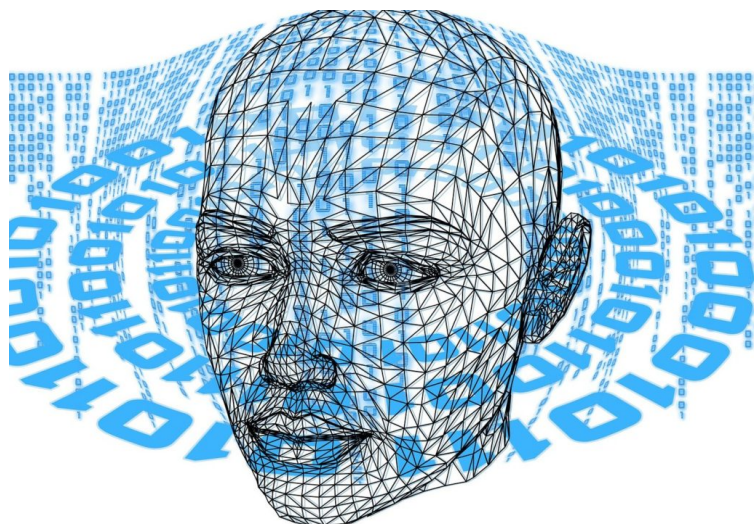
In this podcast, Order of Man founder, Ryan Michler talks with author, Cal Newport about his new book *Digital Minimalism*. Newport explains the philosophy of digital minimalism, why we ought to consider a "digital de-clutter," how to keep from losing control to technology, and how to minimize our digital use in order to maximize our life. He provides some of the threats of too much digital and –more importantly, how we can harness the power of digital technology while minimizing the risk that comes with it. He The podcast is worth your time, for sure!

Here is Cal Newport's definition:

"Digital minimalism is a philosophy that helps you question what digital communication tools (and behaviors surrounding these tools) add the most value to your life. It is motivated by the belief that intentionally and aggressively clearing away low-value digital noise, and optimizing your use of the tools that really matter, can significantly improve your life."

It's about cleaning up your digital life to use just what you need in the most efficient way possible.

The podcast got me thinking about how social media also hurts our relationships with other guys. In fact, I would go so far as to add another classification to the list of glaringly character traits described in my last post, **Don't Be "That Guy"**: the "Byte-head" (Tech-no-friend-asaurus).



"Byte-head" (Tech-no-friend-asaurus)

This is the guy whose his face is always buried in his phone. His device is permanently attached to his hand. He spends all his free time immersed in online or mobile gaming such as Fortnite, Minecraft, Mario Cart or PokemonGo. He doesn't engage in active conversation when in a group. The guy is distracted and lacks focus.

Personally, I struggle with the notion that gaming and extensive use of technology is like watching sports on TV for me. But in either case, there should be limits so we will free up time for more important things. Like developing close friendships.

While most of what is written on the topic these days is about limiting the use of technology by young children and early

teenagers, but too much digital consumption impacts young adults and older folks as well. While I feel I have not yet reached a critical level, I have noticed some difficulty with my focus that last few years.

People like Cal Newport see a trend in digital detoxing because recent studies are showing a huge increase in anxiety, suicide and stress-induced hospitalizations, especially among the “digital natives”.

So how can a digital detox help your friendships?

When you confess your addiction to your wife, along with a God Buddy, you ask them to take part in your digital detox as well. Accountability partners keep you from checking your social accounts, surfing the internet aimlessly at night, and wasting time, especially when you are at home after work in the evening. The results are more quality time for your nuclear family and some free up time for an occasional get-together with your buddies.

I believe a digital detox is also about re-establishing your priorities so you can think more deeply about where you spend your time and what you really believe.

Newport states that digital minimalism is a *process*: it's not something that you do, it's something that you *are*. Therefore, he suggests you need to become a better gatekeeper of how much digital consumption you allow in your life.

This process of digital minimalism can help you find some God

Buddies. How about trying it?