

Poll: Technology brings connection, stress

October 7 2010, By ALAN FRAM and TREVOR TOMPSON ,
Associated Press Writers

(AP) -- Technology has become so entwined with college students' often frantic lives that most in a new survey say they'd be more frazzled without it.

Yet The Associated Press-mtvU Poll, released Thursday, also found that being perpetually connected comes at a cost. While 57 percent of [students](#) said life without computers and cell phones would make them more stressed, a significant number - 25 percent - said it would be a relief. A big majority feel pressured to instantly answer texts or voice mails, most get nervous if someone doesn't immediately reply to a message, and nearly half worry whether messages they get are jokes.

"If you're without it, you're disconnected," Megan Earley, 20, a junior at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md., said of technology. "You feel like it's a lifeline."

The Internet's central role for many students was underscored last month when Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University freshman, leaped to his death from the George Washington Bridge after others secretly webcast his sexual encounter with another man. News reports said Clementi left a note on his [Facebook](#) page reading, "Jumping off the gw bridge sorry."

The AP-mtvU Poll of more than 2,000 college students, conducted before Clementi's death became public, found that 9 in 10 had been on a social networking site like Facebook in the past week. About the same number routinely text to arrange meetings with friends and two-thirds

relax by watching movies or TV shows online.

On a deeper level, many use technology to emit cries for help. One in five say they've posted public messages on sites like Facebook seeking emotional support, while more than two-thirds say they've read public posts by friends pleading for such assistance. Women are more likely than men to post such messages or say they've seen them.

"This ability to reach out and get our friends to help us, it comes at a price of being much more exposed, and people being much more visible and under stress because we can't always control the message about ourselves," said Mikolaj Jan Piskorski, a Harvard Business School professor who has studied online social networks.

Those postings open a window into a world where 8 in 10 students say their lives are happy yet 6 in 10 say they've recently felt too stressed to hang out with friends, an increase over the past two years. Similar numbers say they've been too agitated for school work.

Twenty percent say they have a friend who has discussed suicide over the past year, and 13 percent say a friend has tried to kill himself or herself. Nine percent have considered it themselves. About a quarter have weighed getting professional counseling for their problems, though only about half that number have done so.

Piskorski said Internet postings seeking help have undoubtedly allowed many troubled students to get assistance.

Casey Wakely, 22, a senior at Adelphi University in Garden City, N.Y., learned about high-tech hazards first hand. In December, she says, someone anonymously posted derogatory things about her on a widely read blog, causing emotional problems for which she continues to get therapy. She now limits pictures and information about herself that are

publicly available online.

"I just try to get the good out of it now," she said of the Internet.

Despite the mix of promise and peril, technology draws mostly favorable reviews as a social tool. Eighty-five percent say [social networking sites](#) make them feel more connected to people, not less. And 54 percent say increased use of technology makes it easier to feel close to people, though a substantial 28 percent say it makes that tougher.

"You can have a much better social relationship if you can see the person face-to-face," said Kaitlin Solomon, 21, a senior at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va. She said that online, "You don't really make that connection."

Acknowledging technology's limits, more than 8 in 10 say it's better to resolve conflicts with people in person. By large margins, students say they prefer face-to-face conversations over networking sites or texting for seeking help with personal issues, supporting others with problems or telling friends they're upset with them.

"It's better to talk," said John Gettas, 21, a senior at James Madison. "You can actually hear the inflection in their voice."

Even so, many hide behind technology. About 7 in 10 have engaged in arguments using only text messages, about half have used technology to avoid in-person confrontations, and about 6 in 10 frequently track someone by repeatedly checking their social networking site.

How ingrained is [technology](#) in students' lives? Nearly all got e-mail in the past week, three-quarters got sports or entertainment news online, and about two-thirds said they got information on current events. Roughly 4 in 10 played Internet games - mostly guys - or shopped -

predominantly women.

A third typically use computers, cell phones or gaming consoles for six hours or more daily.

Nearly 4 in 10 students say they are connected to 500 or more friends on their social networks, though a majority say they interact little with most of them.

The AP-mtvU Poll was conducted Sept. 20-24 by Edison Research of Somerville, N.J. It is based on questionnaires completed by 2,207 randomly chosen undergraduate students at 40 randomly selected four-year schools with at least 1,000 undergraduates. To protect privacy, the schools involved are not being identified and students were not asked for their names. The survey has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The sponsorship of the survey by mtvU, an MTV channel oriented to college students, is related to its "Half of Us" program, which it runs with the Jed Foundation, aimed at raising awareness about mental health issues among college students.

More information: AP polls: <http://surveys.ap.org>

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Poll: Technology brings connection, stress (2010, October 7) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-poll-technology-stress.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.