

Every person I pass in the halls of this school owns a phone. It is the device that gives people power. It's never out of reach and can be used like a shield. While this may sound like a real life super power, it is actually hurting people more than helping.

Time and time again I see people stuck in a situation surrounded by strangers. I have noticed the more people are around, the more terrified people become. The thought of someone possibly approaching and starting up a conversation is scary to most people. The first thought to go through their mind is to lift their phone to their face. This ends up working like a shield and for the moment that person may feel relieved.

But this is very bad for the human race. We are a species where communication is our most prized possession. The thought of a quiet earth, where technology can silence a group of people, is bothersome.

There have always been cases where certain people had a hard time speaking in public. But now you have an option. Before, if you wanted to get along in the world you had to figure out a way to get over your fear. In today's world, you can avoid that by recreating yourself into a virtual world.

Millions of people are going to work and avoiding human interaction every day. Once they get home everything changes. With just a few clicks they're connected to the internet. Now all alone, these people feel like themselves. They may go on Facebook and strike up a conversation like it's nothing. They're in their comfort zone. They aren't face to face with anyone, so their nervousness is gone. But the bad thing about this is that they may be spending more time faking life than actually living it.

There are games in which you can literally create your own version of yourself. I watched a television show about this, and it was amazing to me how many people spend so much of their lives sitting in front of a computer screen. They even spend real money to buy clothes and other accessories for their virtual self. It's like they're living real lives without having to step outside of their houses. This can't be a good sign for the state of the human race. People need to take a good look at what they spend their time doing.

When I was growing up, my friends and I would much rather go outside and play sports than sit inside. My cousin is seventeen now and doesn't play any sports, but if you play him in NBA 2K for Play Station, he is amazing. I tried for years to get him to come to the park and shoot real basketballs at real hoops. It turns out he prefers virtual hoops.

The number of social media apps that grab people's attention without the thought of letting go grows every day. Between Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, you can waste hours. I would be lying if I said that I never use these apps. They can be entertaining

to play with when there's nothing to do. The problem is there is almost always something better you could be doing instead.

Even when you try and get away from it by going to, say, the boardwalk it seems to creep back in. I couldn't tell you how many times my ex-girlfriend would stop and take a picture to put on Snapchat. By doing this we missed the moments in our lives and replaced them with pictures and statuses. None of these apps can help you experience life like we are meant to.

We all have a different amount of time on this planet. The one thing for certain is that time is limited and moves faster than anyone would want. We need to free ourselves from the handcuffs that technology puts on us. Without all the distractions we could live more fulfilled lives. Take fewer pictures and take those scenes and store them in your memory. We worry more about the amount of gigabytes our phone has than we do about our brain. We have an unlimited amount of storage that we are choosing not to fill. Technology should not be used to keep us quiet. We need to get back out there and talk to other human beings. That would be a great start for the future.

-- Robert Farrell