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Digital Mindfulness: An Emerging Field of Inquiry and Practice

Sherri Henderson

May 2017

Melissa Jean/Nancy Waring

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Abstract

This two-part paper explores digital mindfulness as an emerging field of inquiry and practice into the integration of technology and contemplative practices. The first part surveys the growing research on the effects of technology on health and well-being. Investigating Buddhist teachings leads to a more balanced and aware approach towards integrating mindfulness with the digital world. Digital mindfulness encourages meaningful engagement while online. It also encourages thoughtfulness, awareness and intention. Digital mindfulness also reshapes and encourages conversations in our homes, schools, and proposes digital responsibility and digital citizenship.

The second part of the paper proposes a framework for a workshop called *Digital Street Smarts*. *Digital Street Smarts* encourages individuals to use their inner compass, common sense, and (technological and compassionate) savviness to become more aware, intentional, and action oriented in making informed decisions about technology use. The workshop primarily delivered to youth, but adaptable to all ages, explores various themes including Buddhist teachings and practices, brain development, awareness, critical thinking, leadership, and the importance of empowering each of us to be engaged, active and intentional in the integration of our online and offline worlds.

Keywords: digital mindfulness, insight, awareness, intention, Buddhism

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<http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collectiveimpact>

<http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/#.WPPVmo61sUE>

www.spcare.org

https://www.facebook.com/spiritualcare/?hc_ref=SEARCH

http://prezi.com/dstfbejaudz1/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

Digital Mindfulness: An Emerging Field of Inquiry and Practice

Since the early 1980's I have had access to technology. In the past two and half years, I have been exploring my relationship to technology, to the tools I use, to my experiences while online, and how it relates to my offline world. The rapid growth and readily accessible availability of technology has affected me. Long periods of time online, multiple platforms and accounts, online social networks, and online related responsibilities encourages my continuous connection for engagement, consumption, and information overload. Can I have a different relationship with technology? How has technology it affected me? Can I utilize mindfulness pedagogy to gain awareness, insight, intention, and innovation to my online world?

Using auto-ethnography to begin this exploration of bridging the gap between my internal and external world (Varela, 2010) allows me to consider the foundations of what it means to remain human while online. Furthermore, learning to sense the evolving complexities of my mind, body and spirit creates a bridge for awareness and insight into making sense of my experiences. Finding ways to collaborate with others, and developing the *Digital Street Smarts* workshop, described in the second section, helps unify my understanding of the world (Varela, 2010) through engagement, reflection, and collaboration. Pioneering a new way forward creates opportunity and healing both for myself and for others.

Growing research about the negative effects of technology suggest too much technology use affects our physical and mental well-being. For example, overuse of technology can lead to issues with obesity, addiction, social isolation, and disruptions in mental health. Similarly, learning and cognitive abilities like focus, and attention can also be compromised. Attachment theorist also raises concern over the weakening of parent/child connection due to the ease of access technology provides for peer-to-peer bonding. Neuroscientist share their concerns over

the increase of dopamine being released, the triggering of the limbic system, and the weakening of the prefrontal cortex. Social isolation and the decrease of face-to-face interactions diminishes nonverbal social cues, and the ability for the forming and maintaining of long term, meaningful relationships.

After six years of practicing and studying meditation, and learning to understand the power of the mind, awareness, and intention, I push the boundaries of mindfulness in the digital world. Contemplative scientific research proposes that benefits of mindfulness could act as a natural and effective means to counteracting the challenges of digitization. Mindfulness could be the balancing factor for each individual user. Furthermore, many of the Buddhist teachings, like the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, and the Middle Path, remain relevant in today's discussion. A collective awakening of presence and mindfulness both online, and offline, affords each of us to look inside ourselves for awareness, intention, insight and innovation.

An awakening called: *digital mindfulness*. Digital mindfulness is currently not defined in any literature. However, to define it, I propose that digital mindfulness is defined as: the emerging field of self-inquiry and practices into the integration of technology and contemplative practices. Digital mindfulness is the slowing down and pausing long enough to assess our relationship with technology. With presence comes awareness and insight in to our relationship with that technology and how it affects our lives. Digital mindfulness explores digital tools, how they are used, and encourage us to develop intentions. It proposes innovation in the digital world to create more opportunities to live online, and offline, in balanced and meaningful ways. Digital mindfulness also reshapes the conversation in our homes, schools and communities about what it means to be digital citizens in today's rapidly changing technological world and why that is vitally important.

The vital importance for the adoption of digital mindfulness in our lives is for our children and youth. Brain development, from early childhood and into early adulthood, is imperative for health and well-being. Healthy attachment and social development are vulnerable to a variety of influences. The rapid growth in technology usage requires a growing need to find understanding, awareness and developmentally appropriate ways to support child and adolescent in growth and well-being. Digital mindfulness encourages slowing down and creates the opportunity for deeper reflection. It also understands the role of parents, the family, and technology in the 21st Century.

Digital mindfulness empowers youth to access and learn from their inner compass. *Digital Street Smarts*, the workshop, in part two of this paper, supports the exploration of digital mindfulness through research and Buddhism. The *Digital Street Smarts* workshop provides an interactive and engaged pedagogy so youth can be empowered to contribute to the conversation. It also encourages youth themselves to become engaged and thoughtful digital citizens who will pave the way forward as future consumers.

Digital mindfulness, as an emerging field of inquiry and practice, is the opportunity to positively affect the health and well-being of online users. It allows for awareness, insight, intention and innovation for each person and for a better future for the collective. Digital mindfulness, and the *Digital Street Smarts* workshop, provides an opportunity for each of us to learn from our inner compass, common sense, and (technological and compassionate) savvy. With self-exploration awareness, intentionality and action oriented, informed decisions, digital mindfulness empowers us to be engage and integrate our online and offline worlds.

Section I: Literature Review and Academic Rationale

The idea of taking my meditation practice to my online experiences never occurred to me until my first class, Mindful Communications, at Lesley. I have been around, had access, and actively engaged in emerging computer science since the early 1980's. At the time of the Mindful Communications class I eagerly consumed all aspects of technology, personally, and professionally. I had several social media accounts ranging from Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and my favorite, Facebook. At the time of the class, I shamefully identified I had 22 Facebook 'pages' to monitor both in my personal and professional life. I also owned the latest iPhone, iPad, desktop computer and laptop. My children, who were 7 and 10 at the time, were as up-to-date and savvy with similar tools. I was fully immersed. I checked, posted, shared, liked and messaged my days away. Until that day when my professor said; "can we be mindful while online?"

Auto-ethnography: My Integration of Mindfulness and Technology

As a mindfulness student, taking the time to slow down, and explore a question is the essence of auto-ethnography. Douglass & Moustakas (1985) writes that auto-ethnography aims to "awaken and inspire" (p. 40) the exploration of the complexity of the mind and encouragement for self-awareness (Keegan, 2012). Pausing into the question, and what was a normal aspect of my everyday life, was the first step in awakening and inspiring my inner researcher. I had never postulated that my technological and spiritual practices could integrate because, quite frankly, those two aspects of myself never even crossed paths. Paying attention on that particular day, and being inspired by a variety of contemplative teachers suggesting mindfulness 'can' and 'should' be practiced in all aspect of life, was my awakening. As a student, the inspiration to

inquire into the unknown and go within was my inspiration for self-awareness and understanding over the complexity of my mind, the practices, and the research.

Over the last two years, auto-ethnography has helped organize and ‘make sense’ of my exploration of the integration of my spiritual and technological lives. As I unraveled and became aware of my online life, I quickly learned that I was overwhelmed and disconnected. Unplugging for a specific amount of time also immediately highlighted that what I had thought ‘made sense’ about being technologically active and savvy, did not. Auto-ethnography allows for the natural unfolding and organizing of self in research. It is “dynamic, holistic, emergent, creative, reflective, interactive, and inclusive,” (Keegan, 2012, p. 339) and reflects the complexities of the mind, my behaviors, and what it means to be human.

Auto-ethnography allows me to note changes in my behaviors and encourages me to explore and foster my values (Keegan, 2012) as a spiritual and technological person. Once awakened, and unplugged, the almost immediate changes went from complete ignorance to feelings of too much, disconnection, and a desire for something better. As I sat down and wrote my final paper in the Mindful Communications class, and then throughout the last two years, I find myself weeding out the excess, merging my professional and personal lives, and simplifying my online life. I notice with each day I become more curious about what tools I choose to use, and how much time I (and others around me) are connected. I also explore what any of that means, and establish my values for being online. Most importantly, I note a stronger desire for being offline and focusing more on making physical connections with others.

As I learn to be more mindful and listen to my ‘gut reactions’ (Keegan, 2012) while online, I also learn to best “respect [the] questions and problems” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40) that come with the integration of my spiritual and technological lives. As a child who

loved typing code to make circles appear on a screen, and loving the latest advancements in new tools, software and apps, I see the complexity that our culture faces in making large-scale changes. First, everyone does not have the same access or the education when it comes to technology. “Universal public education” (Stewart, 1958, p. 223) and access is needed. Second, the rapid growth of technology, marketing, usefulness and desirability drives consumers to buy it, and companies to make it. Furthermore, the usefulness and ease of doing simple tasks more efficiently, assures us it is not going away anytime soon. Similarly, the noisiness and busyness of modern day life, leaves many of us oblivious to the issue, and to the affects technology has on our health and well-being. Meanwhile, new research and understanding into the benefits of contemplative science and practices provides evidence-based insight into the usefulness of mindfulness. Finding the audience, engaging in myth busting, and changes in the political and social systems highlights potential gaps and barriers in supporting the collective impact of being more mindful while online.

Auto-ethnographic research allows for an “on-going process of learning, which is open to, and builds on, ideas” (Keegan, 2012, p. 340). It encourages “curiosity, openness, and engagement” to the problem (Keegan, 2012, p. 340), and allows for an exploration and expression of the researcher’s passion and voice in their findings (Spry, 2001). Auto-ethnography research says that “reality is neither fixed nor entirely external but is created by, and moves with, the changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewer” (Duncan, 2004, p. 4). Auto-ethnographic research also brings different “parties together, in creative hubs, networks, and workshops” (Keegan, 2012, p. 341) to produce learning that is needed in the age of ideas and excessive information. Auto-ethnography, and practicing mindfulness while online, allows the possible in the impossible. The ability to be curious and engaged, and encourage individual

expression and exploration, which allows for new voices and insights for innovation. The intersection between auto-ethnography, mindfulness and the digital world suggests at the very least, the exploration is warranted.

Innovation begins when the collective externalizes assumptions and reactions, and crystallize ideas (Duncan, 2004). Auto-ethnography and mindfulness help define and resolve those inner conflicts by recording the ‘turning points’ in the evolution of understanding and concepts (Duncan, 2004; Keegan, 2012). The ‘turning points’ than contribute to the maturation of ideas (Duncan, 2004) and the (re) discovery of new aspects of the topic, and our relationship to it (Sparkes, 1996). Innovation for large-scale social problems are solved when collective learning happens. Collective learning is when individuals come together to share ideas, challenge bias, and collaborate to create a common agenda, share measurement, coordinate mutually reinforcing activities, and build trust through frequent and structured communications (Tamarack, 2017). The ‘turning points’ are those moments of awareness, insight, and innovation that stem from the collaborative process, and the measurement and evaluation of the fluidity of each new idea, and our relationships to it.

Auto-ethnography is a “collaborative approach to knowledge production” (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015, p. 132) of the social world. It encourages future generations to become more inclusive and culturally diverse (Butz & Besio, 2004). It focuses on putting “our perspectives in conversation with one another” and in the discovery of the “discursive complexities” (Pollack & Eldridge, 2015, p. 133). From knowledge and collaboration, there is a direct link to interconnectedness. Interconnectedness that seeks complexity of the lived experience, but grounded in truth and knowledge of the outer social context (Butz & Besio, 2004). Exploring the integration of technology and mindfulness through auto-ethnography allows others to see into

my experience, and at the same time, encourages the reader to reflect on their world, their perspectives and those implications.

Using auto-ethnography to explore my integration of technology and mindfulness allowed me to awaken in my own understanding and experiences whether integration was possible. As I organized and made sense of my experiences and perspectives I also noticed insights and changes in my behavior. I reflected upon my own values around technology and its usefulness. I then pondered the complexity of the questions, the effects of the situation and the challenges for large-scale change. Being open and allowing for learning allowed me to seek others, become more collaborative, and become more innovative, thoughtful and purposeful online. Youth, as the stewards of the digital age, will need to do the same to be inquisitive, explorative and present in their process so they can mitigate the effects. Integrating technology and mindfulness offers a purposeful and meaningful way to explore a way of being in the digital age.

Technology: Automation, Accessibility and Influence

Automation, accessibility, and the influence of technology affect individuals and society. Individuals need to act socially responsible for the collective (Stewart, 1958) through awareness, insight and the integration of technology into our lives. Setting intentions to fully understand the affects (Stewart, 1958) of being innovative in the use of technology allows us to be stewards, learn skills (Boulding, 1956) and provide good leadership (Stewart, 1958) in the digital age. “The discoveries of today are molding the world of tomorrow, and it behooves tomorrow’s citizen to be aware of the implications for [their] own good, for the good of [their] culture, and ultimately for all mankind” (Stewart, 1958, p. 224).

Automation. Over the course of history, humans have tried to improve mankind by problem solving complex and urgent problems (Engelbart, 1995) through technology. Licklider (1990) imagined a “man-computer symbiosis” that was cooperative, facilitative, goal driven, and evaluative (p.1). Engelbart (1995) envisioned computers as a “supportive tool” (Engelbart, 1995, p. 4) to connect, collaborate, interact, and to build cooperative communities. Technology makes life easier, more efficient, and more connected (Licklider, 1990; Engelbart, 1995).

Accessibility. Having our digital tools always within reach supports individualism and corporate domination. The increase in the ‘selfie’ highlights our shift away from the collective good and more towards the supporting of our individual need. Individualism, supported by technology, also highlights the increasing antisocial behavior, isolation, and disconnection from others (Stewart, 1958). Furthermore, the desire to always have the latest new trend highlights our perpetual draw towards consumerism. The desire to pursue our own needs and consumerism exposes the gap between the rich and the poor. Universal accessibility, education and equality of technology still exist and is cause for concern at a global level (Stewart, 1958).

Influence. Technology influences our perceptions of the world and how the world is organized. It is instrumental in the globalization of modern day life and has a “chain reaction” on “social change” (Stewart, 1958, p. 223). Technology isn’t just a means of survival anymore, but rather a tool for communication, knowledge and entertainment. Algorithms, automation and the ease of access (for some) requires consumers to become mindful, thoughtful knowledge seekers, to engage in meaningful and face to face interaction, and to consider entertainment being both online and offline.

Teen Development and Technology

The adolescent years are extraordinary and complex for youth, their parents and the community around them. Teens face a series of developmental changes during the adolescent years leaving youth vulnerable to a variety of inner and outer influences. As youth become more peer oriented, attachment to their parents decline. As the adolescent brain develops, the evolutionary changes in the structure and function of the brain prepares the child to leave home and enter the world. The decline in the level of attention and focus in the classroom, and an increase in the lack of self-control (violence and substance abuse) amongst peers (Neufeld & Mate, 2011) also causes concern for parents and educators. The stress, pressure and challenges that youth face, in their identity development years further challenges the mental health and well-being of youth. Exploring and learning about adolescent's experiences in a multifaceted way (school, activities etc), with outer influences (substance, technology), and through their social connections (Cheng, 2013) is imperative.

Identity development. Technology has significant effect on the development of youth identity (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Messaging through media is incredibly accessible and varied. As youth turn to Google for expertise, to find answers, and develop opinions on what is trending, popular, and normal, there is a greater need for parents and teachers to teach and hone critical thinking skills. Facebook and other social networks use algorithms to direct attention on topics and support linear, one tracked thinking. Establishing one's identity using popular media can help shape youth perspectives on what is deemed normal or desirable at any given time. Parents and educators need to consider a wide and broad sample of what youth engage in online and offer diversity, meaningful conversation, and a broad range of experiences to support youth identity development.

Social development. The social development during the adolescent years is critical to preparing youth to enter into the larger world. Changes in the brain and to the limbic system encourage social engagement and social relationships. An increase in the release of dopamine supports youth seeking novelty, uncertainty, the unfamiliar and the unsafe (Siegel, 2014). Technology supports connection and engagement socially. Youth are increasingly connected through text messaging and social media, providing conversations and giving the user a sense of acceptance and connection to often hundreds of “friends”. Problems surface because these connections are often not face-to-face or real-life conversations and often do not require real time engagement and are not sensitive to tone, voice and body language. Online interactions often lead to a pseudo-social connection and often leave teens feelings isolated and alone.

Attachment. Attachment begins in the early years and sets the foundation for the healthy growth and development through adolescents and into adulthood. The family sit-down meal was once the centerpiece of family life, writes Neufeld & Mate (2013). The growing concern amongst attachment theorist is that if technology continues to overshadow and support individualism, and promotes peer relations (Neufeld & Mate, 2013) there comes a time when parents need to reduce access to technology further causing conflict in the home. Youth need connection, not separation. Parents need to engage with their children positively. Youth also need connection before direction and thus parents need to work the relationship, not the incident or material. Parents need to find ways to explore the emotion, rather than teach a lesson for the desired behavior. Neufeld & Mate (2013) write that it is not always possible to change the child, but there is the possibility to change the child’s world so that there is focus on healthy, face-to-face relationships that support development (Sax, 2016). When cognitive, emotional, physical,

relational and mental needs are met, the world is safe, and youth feel competent and loved (Cheng, 2013).

Attachment theorist also raises concerns over the increase in bullying, suicide, addiction, and violence in schools and communities (Neufeld & Mate, 2011). Neufeld & Mate (2011) suggest it is not a lack of love or parenting that reduce attachment, but the erosion of attachment in our society and culture. Subrahmanyam & Greenfield (2008) write the growing consumption of technology reinforces peer communication and connection and sending detrimental messaging about the family unit. Media also promotes the secret to happiness and success lie in friendships and peers. Children also spend longer and longer amounts of time in daycares and school, and less time with their busy parents.

If attachment is the single most important resiliency factor for positive mental health and in overcoming adversity (Cheng, 2013) then as children engage in conditional relationships with peers, parents need to become mindful to find ways to meet and notice their children's needs. As peer relationships shift due to maturity levels from day to day, youth can feel a sense of loneliness and isolation. Parents need to provide the face-to-face interaction that encourages deeper communication, connection and sharing of common experiences. As parents prioritize their relationships with their children they support reducing the competing distractions of life. Furthermore, families that enjoy doing things and being helpful to each other show love, affection and emotional support, which is counter intuitive to the independent messaging found online (Neufeld & Mate, 2013).

Brain development. Siegel (2014) shares the changes that occur in the adolescent's brain in his book *Brainstorm*. Evolutionary the changes in the brain between the ages of twelve and twenty-four prepare youth to mobilize and get ready to leave home. The increase in dopamine in

the adolescent brain results in more emotions and a greater need for social interaction. An increase in dopamine also influences thinking, reaction and the seeking of novelty. Creative exploration and challenging the status quo drives innovation and creative problem solving. It is important for youth to connect with peer groups and build relationships beyond their parents. It emboldens them to try new things, and take risks in the uncertain and unfamiliar world around them. Challenging the status quo and becoming inspired for innovation and creation help youth solve challenges they see in the world (Siegel, 2014).

However, the vulnerable aspects of the brain also require parents and youth to be aware of their choices and consumption. Violent video games affect brain development and affect the youth's behavior, mood, relationships, physical health, and sleep. They also desensitize the mind to violence and cruelty. (Cheng, 2013). Extra dopamine also releases with every text message and notification causing addiction and reliance on technology for joy and connection. Navigating the brain development for youth, and the effects of technology on the brain needs to be shared and addressed with youth and in with families.

Mental health. Mental illness is increasingly threatening the lives of our children; with Canada's youth suicide rate the third highest in the industrialized world (CMHA, 2016). Youth are being diagnosed with depression and anxiety, and prescribed with medications at an alarming rate (Neufeld & Mate, 2011). As depression and anxiety diagnosis rise, suicide rates also climb and problem behaviors like bullying, addiction, narcissism, lack of empathy and crime rise. Learning to understand the varying pressures on our youth, encouraging them to feel empowered in their own development, and having accessible, relevant and reliable community supports helps youth navigate these years.

Affects of Technology on Teens

Youth use technology to establish communities online and offline (Turner, 2012) and as their primary communication tools to establish and reinforce friendships and connections (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). However, Neufeld & Mate (2011) write that today's children are growing up "inappropriately sophisticated" and "psudeo-mature" (p. 2) as they are peer oriented and engaged too heavily with technology. As parents and educators it is critical to understand the negative affects of distraction, attention, addiction and social isolation.

Distraction. Electronic media has a highly distractive nature, writes Subrahmanyam & Greenfield (2008). Teachers report that students are less teachable and more difficult to manage. They have lost their ability to adapt, focus, learn from negative experiences, and to mature. Students tend to lack self-control and are continuously pulled in a variety of directions. This lack of self-control and focus make it harder to maintain personal behaviors and require continuous reminders by teachers and parents to pay attention and focus on the material at hand (Neufeld & Mate, 2011).

Attention. Common Sense Media (2015) says that American teens use an average of nine hours of media daily, not including school and homework. In those nine plus hours, teens are having rapid shifts of attention, playing high intensity or mind-numbing games, answering and researching questions in multiple apps, and connected to others through social media and texting. Attention is bouncing between various tasks at any given moment. Willingham (2015) argues "the brain's plasticity turns this quick mental pivoting into a habit, rendering us unable to sustain attention" (p. 1). Some multi-tasking research shows that the ability to continuously scan the environment and shift our focus onto new details (Jenkins, 2009) makes us less efficient. Researchers also share their concern that the constant shift of our attention reduces the quality of our work (Levy, 2016).

Addiction. Addiction to our mobile devices, Internet, video games, and pornography is a growing concern for parents, educators, and mental health professionals. Technology today is being used to overcome mood states, to cope and for cognitive functioning. Technology also encourages physical inactivity, allows for easier access to risky or sexual behaviors, and has become the first mode for social connection. Research suggests evidence that technology is delaying the initiation of sleep (Das, Sharma, Thamilselvan, Marimuthu, 2017) and affects “depression, social anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy and higher stress” (Das, Sharma, Thamilselvan, Marimuthu, 2017, p. 21).

Social isolation. Social isolation and the decrease of face-to-face interactions leads to diminished interactions between people. Research suggests that the inability to form lasting and meaningful friendships, learning of social and nonverbal cues, and the appreciation of the (actual) world around them (Cohn, 2016) grows more and more significant each day. Turkle (2011) suggest that electronic communication has changed the immediacy with which intimacy can be experienced. She says there is a desire for immediate intimacy and the longing for real presence with another, however, the increase in technology use, and the resulting social isolation changes individuals to seek physical presence with the device, rather than the actual person-to-person connection (Turkle, 2011).

Youth today grapple with staying connected to their peers, feeling in control and connected to their interactions, and feel the urgency of repetitively ‘checking in’ to validate their online interactions (Cohn, 2016). Furthermore, loneliness resides more prominently from online interactions and relationships, and youth learn to avoid awkward or uncomfortable feelings. Youth also feel shame and reliance on texting, shy away from oral communication, and place stress on themselves to say the ‘right thing’ (Cohn, 2016). Cheng (2013) writes, text based living

is ultimately destroying the genuine need for human interaction and face-to-face communication and connection.

Buddhist Teachings and Technology: Finding the Possible in the Impossible

Over the past two years and in my studies of Buddhism and mindfulness, I have read and asked various teachers whether mindfulness is possible while online. Although research varies, many prominent mindful teachers say that technology is too distracting for mindfulness while online. Teachers also share their opinions about the negative effects of technology and often teach classes that voice their concerns. As a mindfulness practitioner, and in reading emerging research and literature, I feel that digital mindfulness as an emerging inquiry and practice supports the possibility of being mindful online. In further research of the ancient teachings of Buddhism I am encouraged that by practicing the dharma, and with discernment, practice, and an open mind the affects of technology on our mind, body and spirit can be transformed through awareness, insight, intention, and innovation.

In the beginning, technology was meant to improve our lives and to allow us more space and time to be with ourselves, to engage in leisure activities, and to spend time with our loved ones. Thich Nhat Hahn (2014) writes technology is the force for the integration of our lives. Technology is the force of integration of our offline world and our online world. Technology becomes a reason for better emotional health, balanced living and the decrease of stress. Technology, and the prevalence of it, provides the context and necessity for what is needed to integrate our technological lives with our spiritual lives. Our use of technology should go right to the source of truth – suffering - and rest on pivot of sorrow (Mahathara, 1995).

Four Noble Truths. To understand the destruction of technology there is a need to understand and become aware of the Four Noble Truths. In Buddhism the Four Noble Truths are:

to know suffering is inevitable, to realize there is a cause of suffering, to see the end of suffering, and that the end of suffering is contained in the eight-fold path (Mahathara, 1995).

Suffering is inevitable. To know that suffering is inevitable means that the truth or negative effects of suffering is prevalent in all areas of our life. Furthermore, any advancements of technology are also inevitable. The ability to see that suffering in all areas of life is the ability to awaken to our suffering (Mahathara, 1995).

Cause of suffering. The cause of suffering with technology is; humans are bound to suffering (sorrow, lamentation, grief, pain, despair) due to self. The “self-possesses feeling, or feeling is in the self, or the self is in feeling” (Mendis, 2006). Furthermore, feelings are experienced as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Pleasant feelings (without wise consideration) lead to attachment and desire, unpleasant feelings lead to aversion, and neutral feelings lead to ignorance. Pleasant feelings are great while they last, but when the pleasurable item is taken away the feeling quickly changes to displeasure. Alternatively, unpleasant feelings tend to be avoided, and when the unpleasant feeling leaves, the person feels satisfaction, which leads them right back to the unpleasant feeling. Neutral feelings (without wise attention) fosters ignorance, apathy, and indifference to our own and others welfare. Learning to develop balance, equanimity, and the understanding of impermanence, becomes the highest form of joy (Mendis, 2006).

End of suffering. Thich Nhat Hahn (2014) writes, establishing positive intention, insight, and innovation with technology is the key to the end of suffering. In Buddhist Psychology, the five universal mental formations help provide context to the point of contact with our awareness, feelings, perceptions, intentions, and focus. Transforming and moving towards our highest, most noble self, is position to end suffering. The end of suffering is also the consideration of intention.

How can we learn to be present in our suffering? What do we want? How can we create joy and wellbeing for ourselves? For others? How do we nourish, cultivate and water the seeds of compassion, equanimity, forgiveness and understanding?

Humans naturally avoid suffering. Over consuming, is a long-standing issue and occurs online, through distractions like music, or reading, or through avoiding all aspects of life. Learning to breath, walk, and remain present in each aspect of our lives is to energize our minds and deal with suffering. From this space, people can heal, transform and live deeply within their lives. Restoring the beauty within us, with others and in the natural world is the motivation for true happiness. True happiness involves actively and intentionally engaging in understanding, compassion and care for each other.

Making good use of technology by being innovative and inspiring, bring us together. Using technology can be a reminder to return to our quiet nature, to help each other suffer less, to connect and encourage dialogue, and allow movement through life in meaningful and mindful ways. Life is after all a series of learning, practicing, working and playing. Enjoying each moment, whether online or offline should be our goal.

For me an example of using technology to support and inspire others is using technology to help support others in times of need. For example, developing more meaningful connections with distant friends allows for intentional love, care and support during times of celebration and difficult times. Supporting a dad whose son is dying from cancer, creates a space for mindful listening, thoughtful speech, and the space in between to consider and reflect on what is needed, a word, a call, a visit, or what can be said in that moment, if anything at all.

Integrating our lives online and offline doesn't mean eliminating technology from our lives, but rather becoming aware of the suffering that exist. Once the suffering is acknowledged,

and it is understood as inevitable, there is opportunity for us to explore the causes of suffering including the reasons for pleasantness, unpleasantness, and ignorance. Careful self-exploration and awareness allows us to move into our higher self and to set intentions to live life more mindfully and with intention.

Following the eight-fold path. The prescription for relieving suffering and becoming enlightened to enter *nibbana* is the eightfold path (Mahathara, 1995). Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Actions, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration become the platform for which to establish our actions while online.

Reflecting back on my Mindful Leadership course I developed a contemplative approach in the form of a workshop for organizations like the *Spiritual Care Programme* to establish mindful communication strategies on social media (see Appendix A). Drawing upon Kim Nolan's (2013) dissertation and the eight-fold path, I established a 'way of being' that encouraged authenticity, inspiration and "mutual understanding and trust" (Bohm, 1996, p. 2) between the organization and their followers. Using Facebook as a platform, the organization developed their social media strategy by creating an online 'community' that is connected and collaborative in nature for the betterment of all. The ten factors for contemplative communication online required users to share their 'calling' of intrinsic motivation, purpose and meaning. With 'compassion' *Spiritual Care Programme* shared altruism, love and loving-kindness by 'caring' and providing a sense of belonging, interconnectedness and compassionate action. Using deep listening in every communication they reflected and were guided by the importance of Right Speech and 'centered communication'. Remaining open and 'creative' they found ways to share stories and 'cultivate stillness' for a shared and felt sense of inner peace. Insight, intuition and wisdom provided 'clarity, and 'being aware' of the present moment kept

them grounded. Finally, humor, laughter, and positivity became the ‘contagious joy’ for each of their followers and more importantly for all the content they shared.

As I delivered the workshop, and then provided consultation on writing post there was a particular intentional presence that provided meaningfulness and purpose for being online. Interestingly enough as they explored their online presence and uploaded content, the most successful post (both from the analytics, and personal evaluation) were those that they felt deeply connected and attuned with, which further supported evidence that mindful communication online quite possibly can transcend into virtual world too.

Middle Path (*majjhima patipada*). The middle path is the place in between chaos and rigidity, desire and aversion. Learning to balance self-indulgence (that which limits or slows down our spiritual progress) with self-mortification (that which weakens our intellect), is imperative both online and offline. Seeking balance, harmony and grace within our minds and amongst the defilements of ignorance, aversion, craving, doubt and sloth and torpor (Mahathara, 1995) allows each of us to depend on ourselves and “be ye islands unto yourselves, be ye a refuge unto yourselves, seek not refuge in others” (Buddha).

Buddhism, and being online, is not just something to be studied but rather something “to be learned and put into practice in the course of one’s daily life, for without practice one cannot appreciate the truth” (Mahathara, 1995). Utilizing Buddhist teachings while online help us explore the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-Fold Path, and the need for balance and the middle way. Keeping an open mind and sympathetic heart, during the time of reflection and practice the need to be online, slowly reveals and reflect the rays of wisdom and compassion to become citizens of this modern world (Mahathara, 1995).

Mindfulness: The Practice

Mindfulness as a practice is a balanced and centered way to approach our lives. The practice of mindfulness, derived from Eastern contemplative traditions, helps cultivate capacities for attention and awareness (Mendelson et al., 2010). Mindfulness is about paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). It's a "way of being" in the quiet presence of each moment, with awareness, tolerance, responsiveness, and less reactivity. A mindfulness practice builds resiliency and understanding into the nature of our minds and enhances our ability to inhibit cognitive and emotional responses (rumination) that increase and maintain stress (Brefczynski-Lewis et al., 2007). Mindfulness practices have positive effects on our physical and mental health. It reduces mood and anxiety disorders, distress, emotional and behavioral reactivity and blood pressure (Mendelson et al., 2010). It also improves awareness and sleep (Mendelson, 2010).

Mindfulness practices include breath awareness, sitting meditation, body scans and walking practices. Mindfulness practices teach us to experience the present moment, to make choices, to take effective action, to let go of thoughts, feelings, and perspectives and stay connected to the present moment experience. Mindfulness practices "improve adjustment among chronically stressed" youth "by enhancing self-regulatory capacities (Mendelson et al., 2010, p. 985) and have a positive impact on reactions to stress, rumination, intrusive thought and emotional arousal (Mendelson et al., 2010). Youth who experience persistent environmental stresses and internalize external factors can have poor academic performance, school dropout, and negative social interactions (Mendelson et al., 2010). Continual stress affects neurobiological events, and affects brain development impairing the stress response system underlying cognitive and emotional regulatory capacities (Mendelson et al., 2010).

Mindfulness practices develop two systems of attention: outward attention (school work, video games, email) and inward attention (daydreaming, planning, reflection) (Willingham, 2015). Mindfulness allows us to train our minds and monitor the focus of our attention, detect distractions, disengage attention from distraction when needed, and redirect and engage attention to the intended object (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, Davidson, 2008). To learn to train our minds for a better life, writes Hamlin (2015), means helping people “create intentionality” (p. 1) about how to deploy our attention and process information. The argument is “most of us spend more than half of our mental energy flitting from thought to thought” (Hamelin, 2015, p.1), and app to app. All of us ultimately want to be more productive, less depressed, and physically healthier. Mindfulness supports our growth to become more deliberate and intentional with our cognitive energy (Hamlin, 2015). It’s about understanding and restructuring the neural pathways in the brain. Mindfulness helps us get out of the ruts that have formed due to repetitive patterns of use and behaviors. To focus our attention strengthens our attention (Hamlin, 2015) and develops core principles like “gratitude, compassion, acceptance, meaning and forgiveness” (Hamlin, 2015, p. 2). Hamelin (2015) argues that mindfulness practice are not just inward practices, but rather a place of innovation that align to who we are, how our brain works, and entails our external practice of living (Hamlin, 2015, p. 2).

Teaching youth to incorporate mindfulness practices to their online presence and experiences supports their overall health and well-being, while bringing awareness to how they are feeling while online. Learning mindfulness also encourages youth to explore insights both online and offline and develop their intentions for living the best, and most joyful lives. As youth learn to go within, and access their own knowledge, youth are encouraged to seek novelty and creativity so they can innovate the answers to their own questions. They ultimately become their

own force for the integration of their lives, and define their own leadership to finding new ways to live a more balanced and emotional healthy lives (Mahathara, 1995).

Digital Mindfulness: An Online Practice

Digital mindfulness is the emerging field of inquiry and practice. As technology, rapidly advances, the world speeds up, and our connections and interactions to self and other becomes increasingly automated or virtual there is growing need to consider and reflect on the impact technology has on the individual and the collective. Digital mindfulness is about slowing down, building awareness, insight, intention and innovation in our online pursuits. Drawing from both the fields of technology and computing, and merging it with contemplative sciences and practice, digital mindfulness explores the role of individuals as digital citizens and our influence on social change, collaboration and connection in a digital world. Membership in a digital society includes individual rights, free market, and the right to pursue one's vision of a good life. Participants in a digital society are able to use the web freely (ie. research, sell online) and facilitate participation for improved communities (Carrizales, 2009, p. 351). Reflecting on the process of digital mindfulness, and the deeper values in our everyday life builds the integrity of our daily lives, and character to live a more compassionate, kind, and just life.

An emerging inquiry and practice. Digital mindfulness is an emerging inquiry and practice into knowledge. Embodying knowledge as a “collective agreement combine[s] facts with other dimensions of human experiences, such as opinions, values, and spiritual beliefs” (Dede, 2008, p. 80). Issues of validating knowledge and expertise should also occur within each family and community (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). “Knowledge is decentralized, accessible, co-constructed by and among a broad base of users” (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009, p. 247). Learning happens across both physical and cyber spaces because of the

collaboration and participation by youth (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009, p. 247). The emerging knowledge for youth that is acquired through digital mindfulness means a greater acceptance to the unknown of their present and future and inspires in youth a desire to be open to learning. It also validates their own personal knowledge, and allows them to develop their own opinions around the accessibility of technology and the co-construction of their future.

Connection to self. Levy (2016) says, individuals learn best from themselves. The practice of digital mindfulness establishes guidelines based on wise choices to live a happy, healthy and effective life. To slow down and not rush, “is as much as an attitude...as an objective fact” (Levy, 2016, p. 82). To slow down and inquire into the very nature of our experience online (and offline) is to appreciate the experience and the very tools that engage that experience. Presence while online allows for choice, rather than letting our tools decide for us (Levy, 2016).

Youth also want to embody their online experiences by physically experiencing their lives through their five senses and presence (Cohn, 2016). Since it is difficult to remain present and connected to our minds and bodies during conversations, teaching and practicing mindfulness should be a prerequisite for all encounters both online and offline. Mitchell (2015) writes, our relationships both to ourselves and each other depends on our ability to embody our interactions.

Connection to other. Presence also opens dialogue. Dialogue occurs between two or more people who make “something in common [or] creating something new together” (Bohm, 1996, p. 3). Dialogue occurs when listening without prejudice and influence and from a standpoint of cooperation, truth and coherence. To become aware of our own blocks, remain attentive to our own fears, and take stock of our own suffering allows us to collectively create

something new. Creating something new, and that is of great significance is an attempts to solve the insolvable problems of individuals and societies (Bohm, 1996).

Awareness, insight, intention, and innovation. Cohn (2016) collected several narratives from youth about their digital experiences. Students identified the call for the promotion, development and practice of digital skills that “ideally act as a space for students to negotiate their mixed perspectives on the virtual life in which they are increasingly becoming a part” (Cohn, 2016, p. 80). Students wanted to “advocate for making the blurriness of ‘virtual’ and ‘real’ lives even more visible in ...classrooms” (Cohn, 2016, p. 81). They also wanted to “understand how face-to-face interactions inform virtual ones, and vice versa” (Cohn, 2016, p. 81). Youth wanted look beyond the “addiction narrative emerging from popular news stories” and focus on supporting youth that “grapple with when and how much to use it” (Cohn, 2016, p. 83). Students want to find intentional and meaningful ways to explore, discuss and be intentional with technology.

Impact. Today’s culture and the rapid advancement of technology is having significant affects on the emotional; neurobiological, interpersonal health of teens. The speed of change is so fast and reality is getting lost in the complexity of the ever-changing world. Youth are receiving rapid amounts of information, and at a high rate, unknown in lifetimes a generation ago. This rapid rate of information absorption and energy that is shared in our society shapes our brain. Similarly, as information shapes our brain, so does culture. Fear lies that in today’s culture there will be a generation of people who engage interpersonally and beyond text based media. A whole generation of people who will never engage in face-to-face interaction and in the richness of both verbal and non-verbal (eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, gesture, posture, timing, intensity of response). Losing the face-to-face interaction, as social beings, disallows

each of us map our own individual inner experience as well as others inner experience with compassion, care, insight and integration (Siegel, 2014). At the same time youth somehow navigate and flourish in the digital world in which alarms the older generations.

As parents and educators our goal is to help youth be self-sufficient, self-directed, and grounded so they have a positive sense of who they are with a clear sense of direction and purpose in their lives (Neufeld & Mate, 2011). As the adolescent brain develops, it is our role as adults (educators, mindfulness students, parents) to encourage and empower youth to see both the essence of their changes in their brains, but also the affects they have on their mind (and visa versa). Adults can also encourage that youth see the purpose and meaning behind these structural changes, and help youth build their “internal compass” so youth can be true to themselves, to their values, and to make choices about engagement (socially, mentally, physically, emotionally). Youth then become the innovators of their lives and the lives of everyone around them. Changes in the adolescent brain are not just about the innovation that happens in music, art, science and technology, but also teaches our children to grow up and be adults who live a vital life across their life span. A life that is full of passion, social engagement, loving relationships, encouragement to try new things, and the love of learning and continuous challenge to their minds (Seigel, 2014).

Boyd (2014) also questions and challenges parents to explore the addiction and isolation narrative. For teens the “shared social experiences” (Cohn, 2016, p. 87) on their smartphones (taking pictures, reading content, social networking together) is vastly different than the parents who silently bury themselves in their phones and ignore their surroundings. Online socialization may isolate youth, but at the same time when youth come together they also collaborate and create (Cohn, 2016) the world that they live in, together. Studies suggest that when youth receive

social validation they reduce their virtual interactions, suggesting that online interactions may act as a salve for loneliness (Cohn, 2016). Employing balance and creating opportunities for users to choose (Cohn, 2016) allows youth to be empowered in their digital life.

Digital citizenship. Digital citizenship, according to Mossberger et als (2007) defines “digital citizenship as those who use the Internet regularly (have access to) and effectively (have educational competencies)” (Carrizales, 2009, p. 351). Digital citizenship has an ‘ascriptive hierarchy’ in that not all people have access to and can be excluded from full citizenship (race, gender, location, ethnicity, socio-economic, education, access to high speed) due to racial segregation and poverty hindering full participation in society (Carrizales, 2009).

Carrizales (2009) writes, “the building blocks for citizenship in the information age are quality public education combined with universal access to the Internet” (p. 351). However, policies around digital citizenship are limited and underfunded. At a municipal level, wireless access should be readily available for all citizens. At a provincial level, rural citizens should have access to high speed Internet. Social programs in education and health should also address the need for balance, awareness, and well-being. At a federal level, laws and policies should protect the rights of individuals that provide ethical access and social policies for all users. At this time, digital citizenship is left primarily to scholars and administrators (Carrizales, 2009).

Digital citizenship at the education level needs to focus on student’s everyday use and learning (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). Teen’s online usage should include: learner participation (inquiry, communication, best practice eLearning, evaluation), creativity, and online identity formation. (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). Teens make local, national, and international connections (e-pen-pal) that shape participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs about other cultures. Teens are also media makers in that they participate, collaborate, distribute and

include formal and informal online practices in everyday life (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009).

Digital citizenship promotes resiliency in times of crises, and times of joy. Resiliency builds upon coping and adaptive capacities to transform individual and collective welfare into “sustainable societal robustness for future crises” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 5). Resiliency isn’t just a solo journey; it is an interdependent experience to help others feel safe and cared for within a community (Unger, 2016). Creating resiliency is about helping others navigate and negotiate what they need and co-creating communities for social change. Social resilience is “social transformation in the face of global [and technological] change” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 5).

Influences social change, collaboration, and connection. Socially teens use participatory media and social digital technologies (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009) to engage and interact where both the user and the content are important (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). Discussions on how to use social media, collaborative knowledge development (wikis), creative works (podcast, blogs, microblogging), content aggregation and organization (Really Simple Syndication – RSS), feeds and tagging tools, and interactive/cross discipline mashing of information/data (geographical data with crime data (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009) should be discussed.

Exploring the integration of science, technology and contemplative practices and wisdom traditions is neither dependent nor independent of each other, nor how one shapes one another. Rather the goal is to recall the mutual constitution, co-construction, and co-production of each (Epstein, 2008). Jasanoff (2004) writes, “the ways in which we know and represent the world are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it” (p. 2). By paying attention to the

place and significance of how life can be imagined online and offline, ought to be studied (Epstein, 2008).

Digital mindfulness doesn't merely change how to live our lives; digital mindfulness lends us the power to be more present, and offer tools for a better way of being. Digital mindfulness also broadens our repertoire to do our daily migration between surfing over topics while diving in deep to read and think in critical, highly reflective and creative ways (Keegan, 2012). Digital mindfulness research maps the territory of what it means to be "quintessentially human" (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 25) and "soothsayers of the future" (Keegan, 2012, p. 343).

Digital mindfulness allow us to open our senses, heart and mind to receive [each] moment fully (Kramer, 2007) to become "receptive fields touched by words, emotions, and energies of our fellow human beings, grounded in clear awareness and sensitive to [each other's] offerings" (Kramer, 2007, p. 150). Learning about digital mindfulness changes the action and thinking about for the very same tools. Large-scale change occurs when engagement of entire systems is about learning, becoming, engaging and acting (Born & Merhilan, 2015). Subsequently, "learning communities" are the "mechanism that prompts large scale change in thinking – where a group of people develop a collective wisdom that causes them to act and live differently" (Born & Merhilan, 2015, p. 25).

Rights, freedom and vision to pursue goals. Furthermore, supporting youth in the digital age encourages us to look at multi-tasking and 21st Century learning. Levy (2016) writes, "multi-tasking is a valuable, even necessary, twenty-first century skill" (p. 86). Henry Jenkins from the University of Southern California, argues that "today's schools ought to devote more attention to fostering new media literacy skills, among them multi-tasking" (Levy, 2016, p. 86). Youth want to explore and reflect upon how and why they can shift their attention between two

objects in the same application and between two different applications, more readily and easily than their parents. They can also switch between two devices, and even between online and offline activities (Levy, 2016, p. 88) encouraging further neuroscience and contemplative research to understand how, and why. Levy (2016) writes, for youth it is not about “how you define a task” but more “important as seeing when the shifts in your attention are effective, healthy, and when they aren’t” (p. 88).

Moving forward and imaging the future for our youth, there is a growing need for technology, computer design and application to become helpful to humans for better understanding and relationship with the world (Heuman, 2014). Levisohn (2011) writes; “designers of computer systems and applications” will need “to incorporate the full range of embodied experience into computational interaction (p. 108), because research suggests that there are “numerous ways in which human cognition and behavior are dependent upon the experience of the body” (Levisohn, 2011, p. 108). By better understanding how things function and “theories of embodiment, designers of computer systems have the opportunity to transform interaction, increasing engagement, improving the fidelity of communication, and supporting human cognition and emotional well-being” (p. 108).

Participate in community and collective. Youth today have a choice about how, when, and where they want to learn. Youth are creative, interactive, and media oriented and believe more usage encourages preparation and engagement (Greehow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). So much so, that quite possibly, youth today prefer multichannel communication (text, messenger, social networks) to emails and face-to-face interaction.

Creating a community of digital mindfulness also supports Born’s (2014) approach to deepening community when he writes; community is at the “heart” of social change. It is within

community that “we help shape our identity as a collective and interdependent people. It creates opportunity for us to care for and about others and, in turn, to be cared for” while building “a sense of belonging” (Born, 2014, p. 5). “Deepening community is to reach out and build the relationships that will help realize our longing for belonging and true safety: not just relationships, but networks of relationships that we invest in, surrounding ourselves with people who care about and who care for us” (Born, 2016, p. 28). A place of “mutual understanding of what we want, of what we hope, together (Born, 2014, p. 29).

Collective wisdom yields collective impact where “bringing people together to collaborate on a common agenda” (Born & Merhila, 2015, p. 25) to create new stories where everything is possible. “Making the choice for deeper community” is a “choice made in the midst of very real struggles in our own life and in our world” (Born, 2014, p. 133). It is a choice to be a collaborative culture, with a shared vision. It is an opportunity to build collective wisdom where humans gather in groups with a sense and depth of awareness and insight that transcends knowing and leads to profound action.

Encouraging youth to develop their language, identity, voice, and purpose helps youth identify with their culture and community (Turner, 2012) and to interact and build shared social identities where they learn from each other (Turner, 2012). Youth choose their digital communities and to what extent they will engage in the norms and language of their communities (Turner, 2012). Youth also determine how to share and receive wisdom. Exploring how youth can build bridges across generations to engage, learn, mentor, serve, and intern with all generations allows social and emotional intelligence a resiliency. Youth, enthusiastic and tech savvy, can share what that means to be in a digital world.

Reflection on character and values. Increased accessibility of digital technology and awareness of digital mindfulness expands the range of literacy practices students can engage with and utilize in student-centered pedagogies (Cohn, 2016). Students can discuss and share what it means to be literate, mindful and a citizen in the digital age. Students can reflect on the promotional “idealistic” perspectives that emerge with new technology, the social narratives that promote that technology invokes loss - loss of connectivity, loss of community, intimacy, desire, and even authenticity or the reshaping of the social order “of a cultural collective’s identity and values” and of the relationships between members (Cohn, 2016, p. 85).

Computers as persuasive tools can also encourage people to change their attitudes and behaviors (Vidyarathi & Reicke, 2014). Using computers, online applications, or networking capabilities to motivate participants towards long lasting changes encourages individuals and groups towards a healthier lifestyle. By focusing on the very aspect of the ‘flow of energy and information’ develops awareness (beyond insight) into both the nature of ourselves, and perhaps more importantly, the nature of each other (Siegel, 2011). Siegel (2011) says, developing ‘mindsight’ and the ‘triangle of wellbeing’ (mind, brain, and relationships) allows awareness for monitoring and modifying our physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual worlds. Learning to regulate the mind, the brain, and relationships empowers our lives to feel part of something bigger, whole and with a deeper sense of meaning (Siegel, 2011).

Reflection allows for a “deep wisdom about the nature of [our] mind” (Siegel, 2011, p. 250). To know our place in the order of things, is to learn to see ourselves “between and among people” (Siegel, 2011, p. 55) Interconnection becomes the “heart of living a life of meaning and purpose” (Siegel, 2011, p. 76) and living a life that is balanced between our inner and outer worlds (Palmer, 2004) is key. This meta-awareness into who we are, and how we are online,

emboldens us to challenge our thoughts, to be willing to hold and consider different stories, and seek the wisdom that supports the collective (Senge et al., 2004).

Conclusion and Future Study

Using auto-ethnography I explored my experiences of awakening to the complexities of my mind, body and spirit experience in relation to my time and consumption of technology. I explored how the intersection of my spiritual life could intersect with my time online. Exploring automation, accessibility and the influence of technology on our lives suggests that the emergence of technology was to improve and make our lives more efficient. Accessibility is not equitable and the influence of technology needs to be carefully weighed through critical thinking. Youth identity, social, and brain development are complex. Understanding the fundamentals of brain development and mental health help support the health and well being of the adolescent years. Further exploration into the effects of technology highlights issues of distraction, attention, addiction, and social isolation. Looking for an alternative to the negative effects and narrative, exploring the Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Middle path allows an opportunity to integrate our online and offline worlds. Furthermore, exploring mindfulness as a practice helps us explore the concept of digital mindfulness. Exploring the emerging knowledge that digital mindfulness proposes allows us to practice more intentional connections to others and ourselves. With awareness, insight, intention and innovation there is the opportunity to look further into both the positive and negative impacts and explore what it means to be a digital citizen. Influencing social change, collaboration and connection creates deeper relationships while individual rights, freedom and the vision to have goals allow us to remain unique individuals. Community and the collective also play a big role in digital mindfulness as a collective that reflects on character and values. In the next section I explore how the making

sense of my experiences supported the awakening of how I could support others in the development of a workshop called *Digital Street Smarts*

The future of the study of digital mindfulness is unlimited. As I connect and collaborate with my fellow classmate on the definition of digital mindfulness, I am encouraged to learn and listen to how youth interpret and define the topic for future revisions. I am curious to listen to their worldview on the benefits and challenges with technology and how they will be the pioneers of the digital age. At the same time, I am inspired to engage in conversations with varying scholars, Buddhist teachers, and practitioners about how to integrate our technological lives with our spiritual lives. And whether there is any separation between the two. Furthermore, contemplative science and actual quantitative and qualitative research could explore what it means to be “present” online when organizations interact online with their followers. Also, research could be designed and conducted with fMRI’s about whether neurological and physical findings in mindfulness match up, compare or contrast to future findings from being digital mindful. Finally, and most importantly, working with multiple age groups and families, is imperative to shift the focus from the negative affects of technology and look towards the opportunities for healthy, resilient and empowering online experiences.

Section II: Digital Street Smarts Workshop Rationale

The *Digital Street Smarts* curriculum and workshop are based on experiential learning and inquiry and practices into the field of digital mindfulness. The curriculum (see Appendix B) can be used as the framework that supports the development of workshops for all age ranges (parent-driven early childhood to adults). It is also adaptable to use in classrooms kindergarten to Grade 12, and at higher academic levels like undergraduate and graduate work.

The *Digital Street Smarts* workshop hopes to counteract the negative affects technology is having particularly on youth. Addressing Buddhist teachings, and using mindfulness as the foundation, the *Digital Street Smarts* workshop and curriculum hopes to develop the emerging field of inquiry and practice into digital mindfulness as a means of reshaping conversations in our homes, schools and communities about what it means to be a digital citizen in today's rapidly changing technological world and why that is vitally important. The workshop is an interactive and engaged pedagogy so youth can be empowered to contribute to the conversation. It hopes to positively affect the health and well being of online users as it allows for awareness, insight, intention and innovation for each person and for a better future for the collective.

Why Build a Workshop and Curriculum?

Digital Street Smarts syllabus and workshop encourages youth to use their inner compass, common sense, compassion and technological savvy to become more aware, intentional and action-oriented in making informed decisions about their usage. The workshop primarily delivered to youth, but adaptable to children, families or adults, explores the various themes like; Buddhist teachings, mindfulness practices, brain development, social development, mental illness, critical thinking, leadership, and the importance of empowering each of us to be engaged, active, educated, and intentional users of technology. Providing opportunities for youth to come together creates opportunities to explore insights on usage and choice. Learning from their own exploration and knowledge, youth can then set intentions for how they want to engage and participate in their online world. Through sharing and innovation youth are then empowered to share both their wisdom and listen to the wisdom of those around them. Sharing of wisdom sparks systems change, and youth become the stewards of modern day digital life and pioneers of

tomorrow's challenges. This is the foundation for *Digital Street Smarts* curriculum and workshop.

Engaging youth. The *Digital Street Smarts* curriculum encourages engagement through highly interactive activities so youth consider how digital spaces impact their experiences and their lives (Cohn, 2016). Creating curriculum provides an opportunity to consider public rhetoric and its impact on youth online experiences. Opening conversations and developing more analytical understandings helps eliminate tacit assumptions about digital literacy and encourages students to question and critique their usage and experience (Cohn, 2016). It also encourages youth to become more reflective on tool choices and how those choices shape perception of well being, sociability, and digital literacy and citizenship (Cohn, 2016).

Students participating in *Digital Street Smarts* are encouraged to consider the breadth of digital mindfulness through collaborative measures where they explore, categorize, compare and contrast, and locate and identify where digital use is fluid, where it overlaps and exposes gaps, and divergences (Cohn, 2016). Scaffolding on other tasks like practicing mindfulness for attention, exploring intentional socialization and multi-tasking allows for a holistic and embodied experience of what it means to be digitally mindful (Cohn, 2016).

Youth learn the four main steps of becoming mindful while online (Levy, 2016). Levy (2016) writes the four main steps are: to perform the primary practice, to observe what you are doing and feeling, to log what you are observing, to consolidate (summarize) your observations, to formulate some personal guidelines, and to share and discuss your discoveries (p. 24).

Youth also need to be active and engaged in decision-making. In the *Digital Street Smarts* workshop, students are involved in the development of curriculum in meaningful ways. Students can help in the planning, delivery and the process (Jacobs, 1989) so they learn to

explore technology, and mindfulness practices from a study and a practice (Jacobs, 1989). Students then are part of the topic for which they explore. They are the embodied actors of their auto-ethnographic experience. As students reflect on their embodied experience with digital mindfulness they can further reflect on the potentials or possibilities. Students then share insights with others and learn from each other.

Digital Street Smarts isn't about teaching youth the benefits and drawbacks; it's about mapping and exploring what it means to be the experts in their digital world. Having youth ask the right questions encourages them to be reflective and evaluative of themselves. Potential questions youth may ask of themselves and others are:

1. What are the challenges you feel as a youth to fit into society today? Social media/distraction? Stigma, discrimination and how to fitting stereotypes
2. What are the challenges you face with technology?
3. What advice would youth give to adults around technology?
4. Would life be better without Smart phones? Handheld devices? Access to information? Why?
5. What do you think you are missing in your life?

Students have their own world/perspective that helps them deal with the pressures of being youth in a digital world. Youth check out to deal with pressures, big emotions while on their screens. As adults, asking questions and listen deeply to the teens perspective. Parents should spend time with your children in the early years, and in the teen years. Travelling, exploring the world, create those bonds allows children to communicate with others.

Honing the digital craft. Levy (2016) also suggests honing your “digital craft” through highly skilled sets of activities that allows each of us to practice and train mindfulness of our bodies and our choices online. Balancing emotional states, and developing presence and attention can change our experiences online. Reflective and critical thinking “increase[s] our options, to increase our freedom to choose what is skillful and healthy” (Levy, 2016, p.128). It shifts our focus with greater awareness and skill and creates a better life by becoming more conscious, skillful, and appropriate in our practices. Levy (2016) writes, learning to “be mindful and make your decisions” rather than letting our decision make us (Levy, 2016, p. 129).

Designing curriculum. Designing curriculum means considering content, scope, and sequence from an interdisciplinary perspective. Interdisciplinary curriculum, like mindfulness practices and auto-ethnography, must encourage thinking, have indicators that highlight attitudinal and behavioural change, and include an evaluation process (Jacobs, 1989). Curriculum must also have scope from both an interdisciplinary and discipline specific field perspective. It should consider reflection on what to include, what needs to be eliminated, new interpretations, difficult questions, education mandates, stakeholder’s intent and trending topics. Digital mindfulness curriculum should also include both within the classroom and beyond classroom relevance and insight into the lives of adolescents, so they feel supported, encouraged, and allowed for deeper reflection and exploration (Jacobs, 1989).

Digital Street Smarts is about creating learning experiences that demonstrate the relationship of the disciplines (ie. technology, mindfulness, mental health, neuroscience) while establishing the pedagogical learning into knowledge of empowerment for youth. The design of the program must bridge the old with the new (intergenerational learning), and must include a

vast knowledge of the physical, mental and social understanding of what it means to be an adolescent.

Digital Street Smarts curriculum must be adaptive to acknowledge the diversity of voice, and situation. There must be a personal vision to the task (connection, collaboration, integration, empathy, and reflection) and must address both our philosophical beliefs and social constructions. The design choice must reflect a cohesive and lasting educational experience that employs youth to continue to show courage and confidence in their educational experiences around digital mindfulness (Jacobs, 1989). The curriculum also must be individual in nature, but encompassing enough to be engaged in the classroom. It must be experiential, and concrete and creatively solution-focused.

The workshop is multi-sensory, and experience oriented to encourage active participation and creative problem solving. Students answer questions and investigate ideas, and they shape their own questions to explore how there is usually more than one answer. Students are also encouraged to consider a global and diverse perspective to explore parallels and differences and accessibility. Students become independent thinkers about how technology affects them. They have full hands-on participation, cooperation and engagement with their peers, and complete ownership over their experience with technology. Students are encouraged to synthesize their educational (online/offline) experiences and encouraged to have a global perspective on their lives, rather than the sum of its parts (Jacobs, 1989).

Finally, in the *Digital Street Smarts* curriculum, students explore the epistemological issues around: what is knowledge and why is collective knowledge important to “begin to actively foster a range of perspectives that will serve [youth] in the larger world” (Jacobs, 1989, p. 10).

Creating a collective wisdom. *Digital Street Smarts* encourages the two worlds to come together, to integrate and explore digital mindfulness. Building cultures of empathy, connection, and love means to understand our youth. To see pain, anger, and fear link between driving our youth to become adults, and letting them ‘be’ adolescents in transformation.

Digital Street Smarts engages the family, and the community to be inclusive and supported by parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. Engaging the broader community in the conversation allows for greater opportunities for dialogue and more sustaining and significant systems change.

Digital Street Smarts curriculum hopes to build this bridge of curiosity of coming together to have helpful and insightful conversations. Encouraging youth to find their voice and while respecting that with age comes wisdom allows for a collective and symbiotic wisdom for health and healing.

Digital Street Smarts is a call to action for society to build connection; to employ family friendly government policies (businesses, cities, government) that are from family centered policies and practices. Furthermore, continuous learning and further engagement in the brain development in early childhood and adolescence continues to inform quality childcare, postnatal (not just prenatal) classes, and needs for youth in communities.

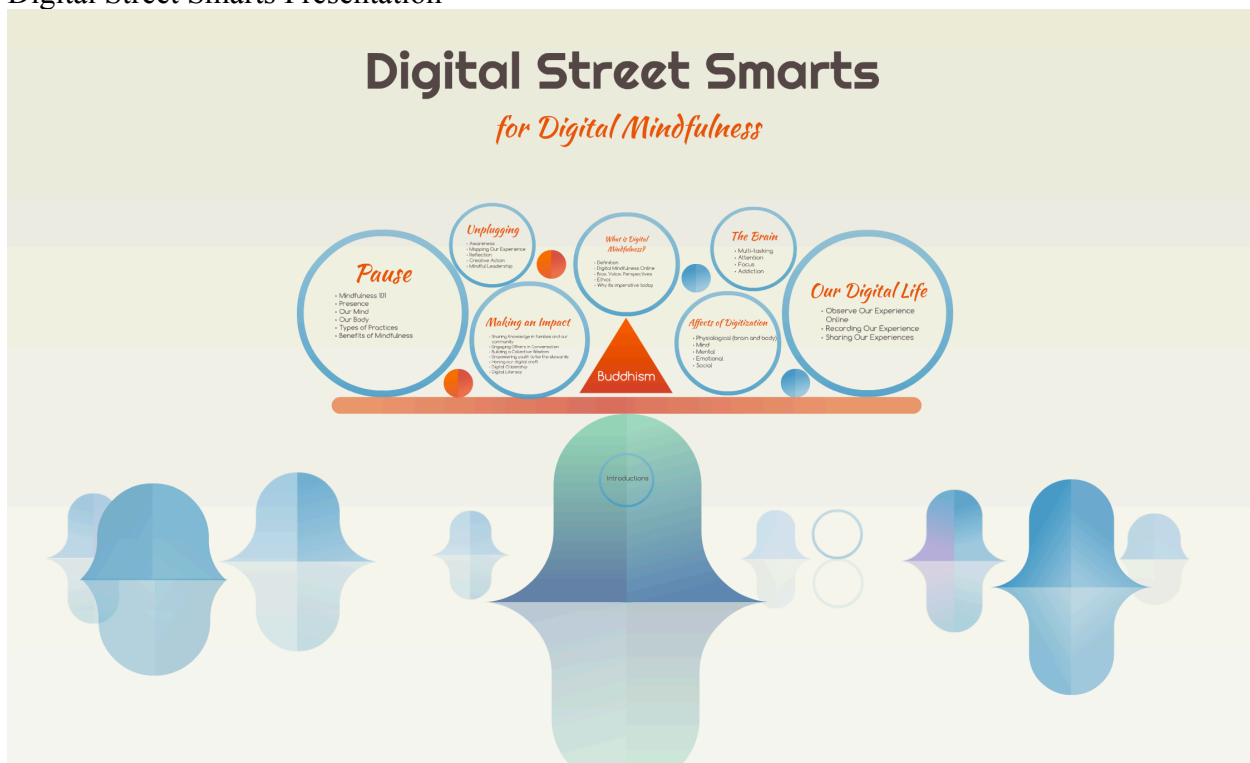
Developing digital mindfulness curriculum supports the concept of social connectivity. Social connectivity is when family and community connections provide actual and perceived support to an individual or family. Supports that create community connections can lead to sustained and valuable informal connections by providing and incorporating family friendly approached, community development, relationships building, empowerment, resiliency and a respect for diversity.

The Digital Street Smarts Workshop

The following two part, two-hour workshop (see Image 1) is developed for teens ages 12-17 year. The interactive and experiential exploration of digital mindfulness helps youth develop awareness, insight, intention and innovation. The workshop is delivered to the larger group of 12-17 year olds, or youth can be broken up into smaller groups of 12-14 year olds and 15-17 year olds to better accommodate the different developmental age groups.

Image 1

Digital Street Smarts Presentation



At the beginning of each workshop participants are welcomed and introductions are made. I share information about myself, my education, and why I am passionate about the integration of the technological world with my spiritual life. Depending on the number of participants in the workshop, each participant then shares their name, their reason for coming to the workshop, what they know about mindfulness, and what they hope to learn.

A guided 5-10 minute meditation encourages participants to come to the present moment. A brief definition of mindfulness is given and youth are encouraged to connect to their breath, their wandering mind, and the ideas of remaining open and curious about their exploration in the workshop, and in their digital lives.

Image 2

Pause



Mindfulness, according to John Kabat-Zinn's (2005) definition is shared and participants learn about presence, the mind, the body and the varying types of practices. After participants learn about the physiological, mental and emotional benefits of mindfulness.

Youth then share their experiences with technology and identify the tools they use, and how certain types of tools are utilized, and make them feel.

Image 3

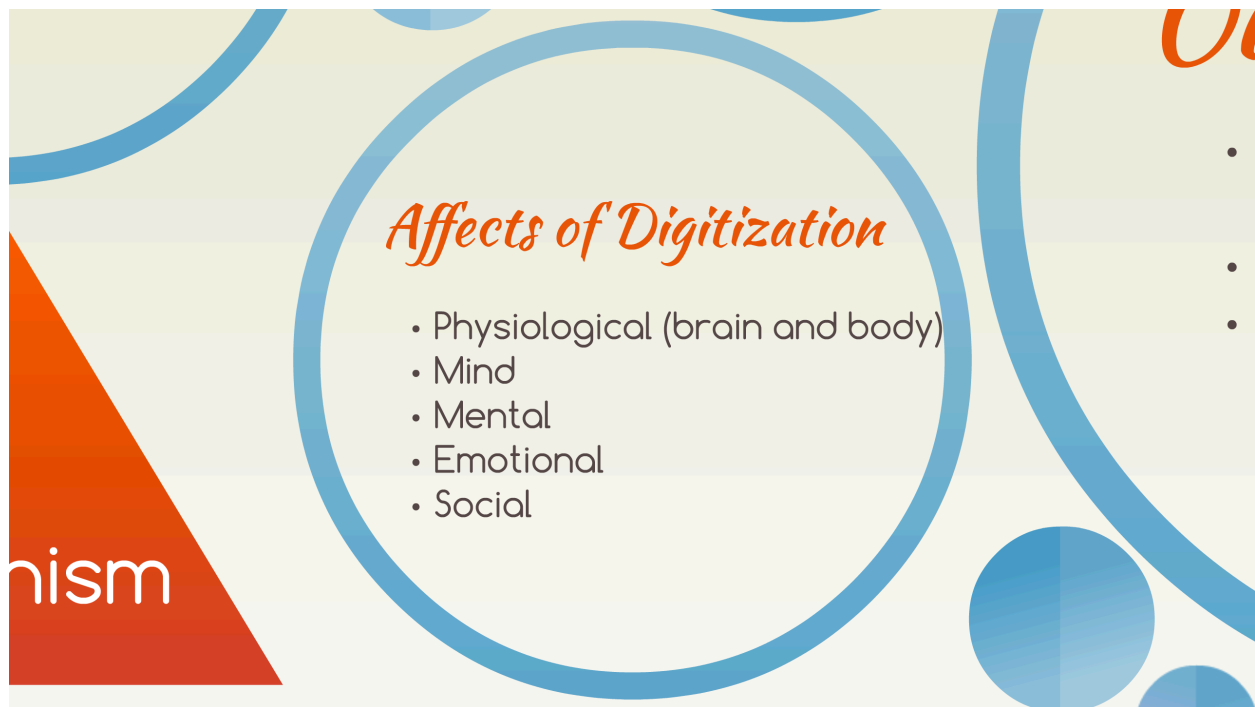
Our Digital Life



Current research on the social, emotional and brain development is shared with youth. Youth also explore the effects they identify through their experiences and a log of their input is marked down on a white board. If issues like addiction, social isolation, distraction and attention are not identified by youth, the group discusses each of them listening to everyone's perspectives and input. Youth are also encouraged to consider the positive effects of technology in their lives. Probing or offering suggestions like connecting with family and friends across large geographical, information at our fingertips, the use of technology for creative endeavours, or simply for fun are given to instigate both sides of the conversation.

Image 4

Affects of Digitization



Asking youth to note all insights on a worksheet provides opportunities for further reflection. After students take part in David Levy's (2015) Mindful Tech practices based on focus and attention online. Youth choose a primary task (like email, Facebook, Snapchat) to focus on for five minutes, paying close attention only to that one task. Students observe what they are doing and how it feels for them. They note what is happening in their minds and whether they sense any emotions or feelings arising and falling away. They connect to their bodies and their breath and take note of any changes in attention. Students keep a running record of their observations on a worksheet. After the five minutes students consolidate or summarize their experiences about what they saw during the experiment, how it felt, and what patterns, if any, they saw. Drawings from their insights students formulate some personal guidelines, or intentions for this task for future use. Students reflect upon a variety of questions: Can they make

different, healthier choices? Are they curious about their observations? Students then share and discuss their discoveries with others, and listen to others experiences.

Image 5

Exploring Our Brains



Students explore the concept of Digital Mindfulness in relation to both their first experience with the pause, and in relationship to their experiment with focus and attention. The definition for digital mindfulness is given and students explore the context for why it is important. Students go home and spend the next week identifying what technology they use. They also pay particular attention to how certain tasks make them feel, and log observations and insights as their week progresses. Students are mindful to shifts in behaviors or attitudes and come back the following week ready to share their experiences and insights.

Image 6

Digital Mindfulness



Students take one period of time to unplug from all technology in a deliberate way during the break. Students are given a “tech sleeping bag” where they can park their technology for a minimum of two hours, and up to one full day. With awareness, students note all observations leading up to, and following this experiment. Students log their experience on a worksheet, and take five to ten minute pre and post to reflect in writing (prose, poetry, word art) their experiences, and what it means to be digitally mindful.

Image 7

The Great Unplugging



After seven to ten days students return to the Digital Street Smarts workshop to share their experiences over the last week. After sharing their week, students participate in a guided mindfulness practice. This practice shares the concept of digital citizenship and leadership. Students explore leadership from the perspective of the 10 C's of Contemplative Communication (see appendices) and consider their call to action for their lives.

Next the facilitator on the whiteboard marks two columns. Youth explore what experiences they would like to have both online and offline. All of the student's ideas are marked down on the whiteboard. Insights, patterns, or emerging collective knowledge is explored, inquired about and confirmed. Students explore what it means to live a balanced lifestyle make a list about their changes in thinking, behaviors, or ideas. Students ask why any of it is important and return to research on the brain. Furthermore social or identity development is also explored

as well as, recommendations from research about time spent online. Students also explore social engagement, and empowering youth to not only support their creativity online, but also reminded to play, experience, and take time offline.

Image 8

Empowering Youth to Go Further



Youth engage in further conversation about what it means to become the ‘stewards of the digital age’ through reflection. They explore the impact digital mindfulness has in their families, homes, and communities and how they can lead conversations in their communities.

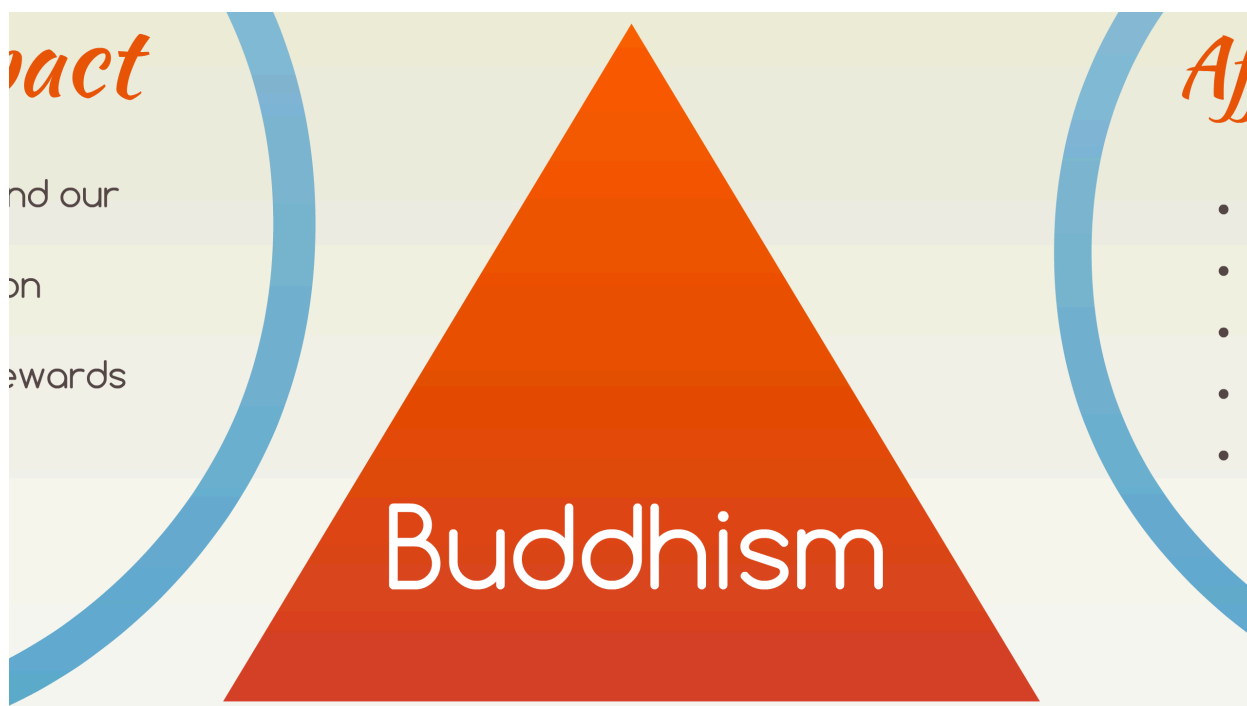
Empowering youth to feel empowered, intentional and creative in how they care about themselves and others both online and offline is encouraged. Youth also engage in conversations about collective wisdom and the force of integration of their online and offline life. They explore what skills they need to hone their digital craft and help define what it means to be a digital citizen. Students will look into local organizations (ie. libraries) to see they talk about digital

literacy. Students also explore resiliency from an individual perspective and a interdependent perspective.

Finally youth have the opportunity to teach what they know, and what technology means to them. After all, technology inspires and informs us how to live more present and resilient lives. Youth learn that having fun with technology is imperative. Parents are encouraged to engage in this session and students teach their parents what they want their parents to know.

Image 9 (optional)

Exploring Buddhist Teachings for Integrating Our Technological and Spiritual Lives



An optional addition to the workshop is offered for youth groups or schools that want to explore Buddhism further. Students explore the basic teaching of Buddhism and how they relate to technology. Students explore through dialogue the importance of becoming digital mindful online.

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Appendix A

10 C's of Contemplative Communication

10 C's of Contemplative Communication



Nolan, Kim, "Laughing Buddhas: The Everyday Embodiment of Contemplative Leadership" (2013). Dissertations & Theses. Paper 61. <http://aura.antioch.edu/etds/61>

Appendix B

Digital Street Smarts Curriculum
Digital Mindfulness: An emerging field of inquiry and practice
Proposed Undergraduate/Graduate Syllabus
Lesley University
Mindfulness Studies Program
2017

Course Description:

In this course students, will participate in experiential learning, inquiry and practices into the emerging field of Digital Mindfulness. Students will integrate, apply and drawn upon theoretical and formal mindfulness practices to create awareness about their own personal experiences and perspectives online and explore current trends and discussions about the effects of technology on the individual and the collective experiences. Students will deepen their attention and ability to sustain mindfulness online and offline and explore how digital mindfulness expands their awareness and interactions with others. Through inquiry students will address and critically evaluate scientific findings, current trends, and Buddhist thinking about the benefits, challenges and possibilities for digital mindfulness. Literature (primary and secondary), lectures, media will help define the emerging field. Student's knowledge, learning, practices, work, and curiosity in this course will create a rich platform for experiential learning, reflection and discussion with themselves and with others.

Course Objectives:

- Engage in high-level discussion of the development of the field of digital mindfulness and be grounded in current literature, trends, and major contributing fields and influences.
- Explore and assess what it means to gain knowledge and apply this to the study of meditation and mindfulness.

- Develop an understanding of the history of technology.
- Critically evaluate opinions and scientific studies about the effects and impacts of technology and meditation and how they support or take away from health and wellbeing.
- Explore and examine the potential utility of meditation practices on technology and technology in our life and how both impact us individually, interpersonally and collectively.
- Explore the foundations and effects of technology on the brain.
- Explore the rich teaching of Buddhism and how they guide us into exploring the possibilities and potentials of technology.

Course Rationale:

The primary purpose for Digital Mindfulness course is to provide opportunities for students to identify, explore, and reflect upon their digital life and the development of what it means to be digitally mindful. Exploring mindfulness practices in relation to online experiences ask students to train and integrate mindfulness into all aspects of their life. This course also challenges students to develop awareness about their usage, the impact on themselves and others, and to challenge bias and perspectives to engage in solution focused possibilities of how we can use technology to benefit each of us individually, and more importantly collectively.

Understanding and actualizing our values, and practicing the teachings of mindfulness is imperative not only to the brain development of our youth, but also to the maintenance, health and wellbeing for all of us.

Texts:

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Supplementary Reading:

Excerpts from various other books, videos, articles, media will be included each week.

Course Requirements:

Participation. Students are expected to actively engage in the experiential learning of this course. Active and engaged participation is required and will be reflective into all written assignments, journal writing, final reflection paper, weekly blog posts and responses to other students. (20% of your grade).

Written Assignments: Students will be asked to write three papers.

1. Paper #1: Drawing upon personal experience and perspectives, write a 5-7 page paper reflecting upon and analyzing how and what technology you use, how you feel about technology, how you feel when you are on your smart phone/computer or tablet, what you think Digital Mindfulness is, and your aspirations and intentions for this course. (DUE: 10% of your grade).
2. Paper #2: Drawing upon the readings, text, journal, online blog postings, and personal practices to date, write a scholarly auto-ethnographic paper (10-12 pages) that explores and compares your experience thus far in this course focusing on your experiences with technology, and your mindfulness practice. Students are responsible to seek out other readings that are appropriate to their area of interest and encouraged to ask questions and inquire further into this field (DUE: Week 6. 15% of your grade).
3. Final Reflection paper: Drawing upon Paper #1, Paper #2, Journals and Buddhist teachings, students compare their experiences in this class from start to finish exploring

how Buddha's teachings, and modern day exploration of mindfulness supports or detracts whether digital mindfulness is possible (DUE Week 12. 20% of your grade).

Journal. Students will keep a detailed journal reflecting on their online experiences throughout the course. Journals are only accessible to the student and professor and respect and privacy will be respected. Students will not hand in their journal but the number of journal post, and the depth and breadth of the post, will be monitored throughout the course. Students learning and experiences throughout the course, and captured in the journal, will aid the students learning and reflection needed for the midterm paper, final paper, and blog post (15% of your grade).

Blackboard Postings: Students are expected to write one weekly post (300-500 words) that critically reflect upon and examine the weekly topic, readings, and personal experiences.

Students are also expected to comment on two of their classmates post thoughtfully and with academic rigor. (20% of your grade).

Course Outline:

Week 1: Digital Mindfulness: Overview

This module will introduce the course and the exploration into the emerging field of Digital Mindfulness. We will take a bird's eye view of the course including the history of technology, mindfulness and meditation practices, neuroscience, mental health and wellbeing, Buddhism, and the development of the field of digital mindfulness. Students will be able to consider the emerging definition of digital mindfulness, and explore the impact, significance and challenges that technology has on modern day living.

Required Reading:

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
pg. xi-26.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. pg. 13-92.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale
University Press. pg. ix – 26.

Podcast.

<http://digitalmindfulness.net/how-technology-could-manufacture-mindfulness/>

<http://digitalmindfulness.net/mindfulness-in-the-machine/>

Meditation practice. Take one 5-minute period each day to explore being still. Sit in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and commit to 5 minutes of staying present. Students may close their eyes and watch their breath flow in and out. Share your initial experiences of committing and sitting for 5 minutes on the blog.

Weekly mindful tip. Be curious.

Assignment. Paper #1 (Due Sunday)

Week 2: Mindfulness: Finding the Pause and our breath

In week two students will explore and experience the basic theory and practices of mindfulness. Through meditation students will experience what it means to be present and connected to our breath, to each moment, and to our rapidly changing minds, bodies and feelings. Students will have a firsthand experience of the challenges, successes, and benefits of establishing a regular meditation/mindfulness practice and learn the scientific physiological benefits for meditation/mindfulness.

Students will also learn about auto-ethnography as form of qualitative research and writing in preparation for their midterm paper.

Required Reading.

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. pg. 27-120.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. pg. 243-312.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 27-41.

Douglass, B. G., & Moustakas, C. (1985). Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 25(3), 39-55.

Duncan, M. (2004). Autoethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(4), 2-14.

Podcast. Rotherberg/Sogyal Rinpoche

Weekly Mindful Tip. The Nature of Our Mind

Week 3: Introducing mindfulness into your digital life

Students in Week 3 will start to explore how to use mindfulness online and to start to observe their experiences while online. Students will be asked to engage in three online experiences: concept experience (maintaining awareness while online), to use technology to record a specified amount of time online, and to observe students time on email/facebook or texting. Each time students will be asked to become aware of their experience, make observations, and record their experiences in their journal. Students will then be asked to share their observations with their peers through a videoconferencing session and summarize and post online individually their reflections.

Required Reading.

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. pg. 121-170.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. pg. 403-481.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 42-66.

Podcast. <http://digitalmindfulness.net/dm-38-mindful-tech-professor-david-levy/>

Weekly Mindful Tip. Dress for success

Week 4: Exploring our Digital Life

In Week 4 students will explore the affects of technology on our mind, brain, body, emotional and social health and wellbeing. Students will explore statistics about usage, demographics, and how this is affecting every social and cultural institution. Students will also explore their own personal usage more including what technology they are using, the benefits, and limitations of that usage, and dive deeper into how technology feels for them.

Required Reading.

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. pg. 121-224.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. pg. 115 - 241.

Kardaras, N. (2016, August 27). It's 'digital heroin': How screens turn kids into psychotic junkies. New York Post. <http://nypost.com/2016/08/27/its-digital-heroin-how-screens-turn-kids-into-psychotic-junkies/>

www.commonsemmedia.org/census

Weekly Mindful Tip. Ask lots of questions.

Week 5: What is Digital Mindfulness

Week 5 we start to define, explore, and develop criteria of what it means to be digitally mindful. Students will further explore their experiences online consider if the practice of

mindfulness is allowing them to find themselves in the definition of digital mindfulness. Students will explore bias for or against, as well as who's voice and perspectives matter in this conversation. Students will explore the basics of insight dialogue with their instructor and as a group to engage in a dialogue about digital mindfulness.

Required Reading:

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 67-83.

Kramer, G. (2007). *Insight dialogue*. Boston, MA: Shambala Publications. pg. ----

Website: <https://metta.org/insight-dialogue-3/> (explore entire tab called "insight dialogue).

Insight Dialogue lecture and session wiki sign up.

Weekly Mindful Tip. Stay mindful.

Reminder: Paper # 2 is due end of Week 6.

Week 6: The influences of technology in our lives – particularly attention and multitasking

Returning to the topic of the influence of technology on our brain students will explore their own experiences with focus, attention, distraction, and multitasking and the affects they feel it has on their own mind, body, and social and emotional well-being.

Required Reading:

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 84 - 129.

Weekly Mindful Tip: Stay found.

Reminder: Paper #2 is due end of this week.

Week 7: Unplugging for and with Awareness

Week 7 students will spend one day unplugging for all forms of technology and then spend time reflecting on the teachings of awareness. Students will explore awareness, how to

find it, how perceptions and awareness change, and the creative ways students can map their awareness from week 1 to week 7 with technology and mindfulness. Students will be asked to reflect on their inner physiological, psychological, emotional, and social perspectives.

Required Reading:

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. pg. 225-286.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 130 -152.

Podcast possibilities:

<http://digitalmindfulness.net/digital-mindfulness-podcast-18-dr-judson-brewer-the-power-of-mindfulness/>

<http://digitalmindfulness.net/digital-mindfulness-podcast-16-dr-larry-rosen-idisorders/>

Weekly Mindful Tip: Stay safe: focus.

Week 9: Online Panel Discussion

This week we join experts in the field to participate in an online panel discussion about the digital mindfulness. Panel experts include:

Lawrence Ampofo. Lawrence Ampofo, “a thought leader on the impact of digital technologies on humans and society. Lawrence is a political scientist, strategic communications expert, author, trainer and speaker who focuses on the impact of emerging digital technologies on the geopolitical system and global business”. Lawrence also host the podcast “Digital Mindfulness”. (digitalmindfulness.net)

John Kabat Zinn. John Kabat Zinn, “PhD, is a scientist, writer, and meditation teacher engaged in bringing mindfulness into the mainstream of medicine and society. He is professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where he was founding executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, and founder (in 1979) and former director of its world-renown Stress Reduction Clinic. He is the

author of *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness, Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, and co-author, with his wife, Myla, of *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*. His new book, *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness*, was published in January 2005.” (<http://www.webmd.com/jon-kabat-zinn>)

David Levy. David Levy, “is a professor at the information school of the University of Washington. He has for many years led efforts to bring contemplative practices and perspectives into higher education. Levy is the author of *Scrolling Forward: Making sense of documents in the digital age* and *Mindful Tech*.” (Levy, 2016)

Students, in groups of three, will come up with one questions each for the experts based on their experiences, readings, and reflections.

Each expert will be given time to share their perspectives on technology and mindfulness and the possibilities of digital mindfulness. Students will be given time to ask their questions and then the experts will summarize their experiences with this topic.

Weekly Mindful Tip: Inquire deeply. Listen with gratitude.

Week 10: Connecting to Our Families, Youth, Community

Using the past nine weeks as a platform for sharing knowledge, engaging others in conversations, and collaborating on the collective wisdom of experts and students, each student will be asked to facilitate another discussion with family, friends, or in their community about technology, mindfulness, and digital mindfulness as a means to create awareness and opportunities for learning interpersonally and collectively. Students are encouraged to share information or engage in conversation about mental and social health and wellbeing, rights and responsibilities, bias and perspective, and connection.

Required Reading:

Goldstein, J. (2016). *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. pg. 287 -401.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. pg. 313-402.

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 42-66.

Weekly Mindful Tip: Go farther – pay attention.

Week 11: Buddhist Theory and Teachings

In Week 11, students will review and reflect upon the various Buddhist teachings around the Four Noble Truths, the Universal Mental Formations, The Eight-Fold Noble Path, and how we can utilize these ancient teachings in modern day life especially in the realm of digital mindfulness.

Required Reading:

<http://digitalmindfulness.net/thich-nhat-hanh-on-digital-mindfulness-audio/>

Weekly Mindful Tip: Go farther – make connections.

Week 12: The Way Forward

Students will focus on topics that explore how they can hone their digital craft and be digital citizens. Students will also critically evaluate their changes, successes, or challenges in this course, and consider as consumers of technology what policies and areas that each of us need to advocate in for the betterment of all.

Required Reading:

Levy, D. (2016). *Mindful tech. How to bring balance to our digital lives*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pg. 153 - 184.

Weekly Mindful Tip: Go softly, with kindness, and more curiosity.