

28 OCTOBER 2020

**WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND COVID-19 STARTS
CONTROLLING HUMAN WELL-BEING**

**AVOIDING A HUMAN
MELTDOWN**

A photograph of two young women with long hair, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a maroon shirt and a blue backpack, holding a black folder. The woman on the right is wearing a white shirt and holding a green folder. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow bokeh, suggesting a sunny outdoor setting.

COVID - THE FACTS

With some 2.6 billion people around the world in some kind of lockdown, already since the first lockdown at the beginning of 2020, an increase is seen in people stressing out, creating their own physical and mental meltdown. Having feelings and thoughts of anxiety, frustration, fear, anger and as a result of this an overuse of the Internet and social media, not sleeping well, gaining weight, excessive control on aspects of their life, lack of concentration, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, burn-out symptoms and many other physical and mental problems.

The current situation is already resulting in a secondary epidemic of burnouts and stress-related absenteeism. This is not only true for adults but also adolescents. In a survey among adolescents aged 12–18, reported was a high prevalence of symptoms of depression (43%), anxiety (37%) and combined depression and anxiety (31%) during the COVID-19 outbreak. Female gender was the highest risk factor for these symptoms.

Taking action now can mitigate the toxic effects of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Around the world - from **Oxford University, CFA and Quantum University, MIT, Harvard** - organizations stretch the urge for making sound mental health programs the highest priority within countries, schools and companies in preventing a second epidemic.

When we talk about mental health, we talk about the ability of a person to deal with daily problems. A sound mental health is when you are resilient and at ease when problems occur, e.g. dealing with challenges in a balance way instead of “controlled” way.

SOCIAL MEDIA

THE EFFECTS OF THE UNPRECEDENTED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON OUR BRAIN

The COVID-19 pandemic is happening in a new social and digital context: social media, internet, and access to information have never been so developed, easy, and instant.

Social media use could be a positive factor in helping teenagers socially connect during lockdown. However, social media also are correlated with conflicting outcomes. According to recent studies, time spent and invested in social media associate with levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental and physical problems.

Moreover, research has given insight on the unhealthy brain development of adolescents.

“A country’s most important resource is its people, and if a large fraction of its people do not live up to their potential, the country will not live up to its potential”

- Joseph E. Stiglitz



VIDEO CONFERENCING

THE EFFECTS OF THE UNPRECEDENTED USE OF VIDEO CONFERENCING ON OUR BRAIN

A new word has entered our dictionary, being "Zoom fatigue". People who have in general no problem dealing with big groups physically are drained, feeling exhausted due to the use of all these different video conference systems. Virtual interactions can be extremely hard on the brain.

Why?

With physical interactions the brain picks up all kinds of signals on the behaviour of the "counter-party", things like arm gestures, leg movement, eye movement, etc. aside from listening to the words in a conversation in order to "understand"/"read" the other person.

In a typical video call, the brain can't see any of these signals and therefore has to come up with intense attention to words instead. If the video quality is poor, any hope of compiling something from minute facial expressions is dashed. Multi-person screens enlarge this exhausting problem. Gallery view challenges the brain's central vision, forcing it to decode so many people at once that no one comes through meaningfully, not even the speaker.

Try to understand this situation for the brain as the following: you are washing your car and at the same time you are trying to read a book, in this case pay attention to what is verbally shared. In 2009 (University of Melbourne) research was done with astonishing results. Multitasking doesn't exist! Human beings can do a lot at the same

time but the quality of the output would be the same as if the activities were done by a drunk person. A drunk state is a stress state for the human brain.

SO, IMAGINE HOW HARD IT MUST BE FOR THE BRAIN TO COPE WITH GROUP CHATS. THE BRAIN IN A "DRUNK STATE" TRIES TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS HAPPENING AND BEING SAID IN THE VIDEO CONFERENCE.

AVOIDING A HUMAN MELTDOWN - THE SOLUTIONS

During these unprecedented times, it is of utmost importance to be equipped with knowledge and strategies on keeping people in an optimal mental and physical shape. This will not only have a beneficial effect on their well-being but moreover on their performance and wellbeing for their future.

Elements where a sound mental health program should focus on is to set a proven strategy that is fundament for long term solid mental and physical health:

- clear, defined video conferencing structure
- focused strategies on keeping the brain in balance
- solid training for teachers and management in order to be a mentor for their students.

When those elements are present, an human meltdown epidemic can be prevented. It is a matter of choice.

References

I studied Classical Violin, Bankruptcy Law and Economics before working in the International Banking Sector. Having worked in the banking industry as a Director Benelux for BlackRock, Merrill Lynch and Deutsche Bank, I left the banking sector in order to pursue my career in the field of neuroscience and quantum physics. <https://www.catheleyne.com/about-me>

Understanding and learning how to change the behaviour of people for the better (physically and mentally), I set-up my own business. <https://nl.linkedin.com/in/catheleyne>

My mission

In a rapidly changing world where over 30% of the world's population lives in solitude, where over 30% of the population suffers from stress-related disorders, I bring not only knowledge, guidance and inspiration, but more importantly solutions. The Digital Revolution is about technology, but the transformation is about people and motivating people to change their state of mind, body, and energy.

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