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OPINION

THE HARBINGER **11**

LIVING inside a BUBBLE

Kids nowadays are underdeveloped socially and are trapped in a stereotypical bubble due to phones

story by **lucy wolf**

THINK BACK TO being a 9-year-old in elementary school playing outside on the playground during recess. You walk up to a group of kids in your class asking to play a game of tag and they all join in excitement.

Now, flash forward. You're a freshman on the first day of school, scouring the cafeteria looking for people to sit with at lunch. You walk up to a table of kids, immediately freeze and forget all social skills as red flushes your face — too embarrassed to simply ask to sit with them. So instead, you sit alone with your eyes glued to your phone. Awkward.

As a 9-year-old, you weren't scared to approach new people and you weren't scared to ask to sit at certain lunch tables. You especially didn't ignore your classmates due to the "Stereotypes in people you should avoid" videos from your TikTok For You Page.

But now, those teenager tendencies are caused by one thing: Phones.

Kids are constantly being consumed by negative media and opinions, making them more scared of social interactions and less likely to approach people because they are just "one text away."

The new normal for teens involves sending quick, instant messages through Snapchat and basing communication and relationships off stereotypes you see on social media. If someone is loud or opinionated,

don't bother being friends with them, because videos on TikTok and stereotypical

influencers mention it's not worth it. In reality our social skills are underdeveloped and declining. Yet most kids don't even realize it.

Nowadays kids can say and post anything through social media, while not having to face any in-person confrontation. They can easily send a mindless text in seconds, like gossiping or spreading rumors, while hiding behind their screens awaiting a notification response.

Friendships shouldn't be built around a screen.

Let's also not forget about attention spans. Over the past decade, kids have become exposed to a wide array of stimuli, like dopamine, which teens get every time they check a notification from their devices. The stimuli are harmful to the young mind and are engaging kids in multitasking behaviors, according to OxJournal.

These behaviors make it hard to engage in long-term tasks like studying for an exam or even reading a book, when everything on a phone is quick and instant. I even find it hard to focus in class, without the urge to reach for my phone to simply scroll through Instagram.

Phones also hinder our development of communication skills, according to OxJournal. As our generation has practically depended on texting to be our main form of communicating, our social skills and ability to read non-verbal cues has paid the price. For some kids it may even be harder to hold a

conversation

when talking face to face with someone because there is no swiping out of chat to avoid a difficult conversation.

Relying on chatting with someone through a phone allows you to hide your mean comments behind a screen, from hating on someone's outfit to spreading rumors. It shields us from facing confrontation and uncomfortable situations that can benefit us by emotionally progressing.

Even picking up the phone to make a quick call is a struggle. You can't just reach for your phone to call and catch up with an old friend out of the blue. Many people would frown upon that, thinking it's so random someone would want to call you to talk about the day. But no, this should be normalized.

And yes, you may be thinking "What about the COVID Pandemic? Did that affect our social skills?" One. Hundred. Percent.

Research suggests that social isolation and loneliness led to less in-person and digital socialization, more social isolation, and less social support during the pandemic, according to the National Institutes of Health.

After being trapped inside our houses for the majority of 2020, anyone would admit how their social skills declined immensely. Not being able to see and interact with anyone except your dogs, yeah that'll do it to you.

People used to write well thought out and heartfelt letters to friends and family years ago. Now, that's been replaced with a small keyboard, emojis and a send button.

The next time you worry about the social skills you need in order to build relationships for your future, unplug from your phone and focus on the present, and not your screen.

A FACETIME FRENZY

A Q&A about SME students' views on talking over the phone vs. face-to-face

Q Would you rather have a heavy conversation over facetime than in-person?

" I would because if things get too intense, you can always, like, make an excuse to leave. But then in person, you're stuck."

Nell Stechshulte | Sophomore



Q Is there less pressure talking to someone over the phone rather than in person?

" I feel like it can be confrontational in-person, and you can't avoid that. But on phone, you can just hide behind your screen."



Catherine Sullivan | Sophomore

IS IT EASIER TO TALK TO SOMEONE OVER THE PHONE OR IN PERSON?

*Instagram poll of 343

IN PERSON

69%/31% OTP

