

IGEN AND THE IMPACTS OF ALWAYS BEING CONNECTED

'UNPLUGGING EVERY DAY IS OBVIOUSLY A NECESSITY,' SAYS NADIA ALAM.



NADIA ALAM
Column

angst, depression and suicidality than ever before - and my gut says that it's connected to smartphones, social media and how the human brain is wired.

"You're not imagining things," said Dr. Deepa Soni, an ER doctor in Mississauga, whose hospital sees high volumes of everything from heartburn to

heart attacks. She too sees more teens and preteens presenting in crisis: "while everyone seems less patient and more stressed these days, teens in particular come to the emergency department with more anxiety, less resilience and more suicidal attempts."

Dr. Soni shared new research that backs up anecdotal experience with parent councils, classrooms and family docs like me. Rates of depression in teens have doubled. Rates of feeling "left out" or

"lonely" have doubled. One in three teens now report "poor sleep." Teens today are constantly plugged in and turned on for six to 10 hours a day on their smartphones, checking them hundreds to thousands of times a day. Most can't go to sleep without it within arm's reach.

It's an addiction.

Teens today live two lives: the physical one seen in school and at home, and the virtual one on Snapchat and Instagram. This virtual life has transformed the teenage brain, and not for the better.

Social media transmits a vortex of information through scrolling newsfeeds, mixing the trivial with the relevant. Teens today are not only afraid of missing out, they're less able to separate what is

useful from what is noise. Shorter attention spans - shorter now than that of a goldfish - impair their ability to lay down long-term memory, which is essential for learning.

The entire tech industry is in "an arms race for dopamine," our brain's feel-good chemical. Companies aggressively track how people use smartphones, finding ways to make them use it more.

Notifications provide a hit of dopamine, so apps like Instagram delay revealing the number of likes on a post, luring teens into checking their phones again and again. Maintaining a Snapstreak (a Snapchat conversation) releases more dopamine, so teens participate every single day even on vacation.

For teens, branding is the new social currency. Carefully curated and filtered selfies show highlight reels of teen life. It reinforces feelings of inadequacy, otherness, competition - and dishonesty because the online persona bears little resemblance to reality.

It's no wonder tech giants like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs refused to let their kids plug in.

Unplugging every day is obviously a necessity. The research is in. Put your devices out of sight, out of mind every evening. Your health depends on it.

Nadia Alam is a Georgetown physician and president of the Ontario Medical Association. She can be reached at nadia.alam@oma.org.

As a family doctor, I can see that our youngest generation, Gen Z or iGen, is struggling. I see more teen

URANUS WILL BE VISIBLE IN OCTOBER WITH JUST BINOCULARS

ORIONID METEOR SHOWER ALSO THIS MONTH, WRITES MARIO CARR



MARIO CARR
Column

when it's at opposition.

For most of the year, the planet is too distant, and too dim to see with your naked eyes or binoculars.

During opposition, it's a different story. The planet is closer than at any other time of the year and will appear a little brighter than

usual. It can also be seen from sun-up to sunset.

Some young people might even see it with their naked eyes. For most of us, we'll need the aid of binoculars.

Look for it rising in the east in the constellation Aries at sunset. It will reach its highest point in the sky just after midnight, as it moves southward when it sets in the west at sunrise.

Here are October stargazing events, which are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

Oct. 11: The Moon is above Jupiter low in the southwest at dusk.

Oct. 12: Hamilton Amateur Astronomers annual general meeting 7:30 p.m., Hamilton Spectator, 44 Frid St. Free admission, door prizes and everybody welcome. An optional food

bank donation of non-perishable goods will be collected and appreciated.

Oct. 14: The Moon is close to Saturn in the evening sky.

Oct. 17-18: The Moon is close to Mars in the southern evening sky.

Oct. 21: The Orionid meteor shower peaks after midnight.

Oct. 24: The Full Moon is called the Hunter's Moon. Venus is also behind the

Sun, or at inferior conjunction and can't be seen.

For more information, see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers website or call 905-627-4323. The club offers a basic astronomy course for members.

Mario Carr, the author of this report, is the club's director of publicity and can be reached at mario-carr@cogeco.ca or on Twitter @MarioCCarr.

On Oct. 23, you can see distant planet Uranus with just a pair of binoculars

Don't be a LitterBug! Please keep our community clean.



GET READY FOR WINTER!



SERVICE

NEXT DAY APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE

Call or email appointments@gallingerford.com

The Works Ford Service In Milton - Only \$89.95



With The Works, our Ford-Trained Technicians here at Gallinger Ford in Milton will help keep your Ford running smoothly.

What you will get:

- An up to 83-point inspection of your vehicle, with every hose, belt and fluid checked
- A comprehensive Vehicle Report Card: a checklist of important details on the state of your vehicle in terms of service and repair, explained to you by a Ford Service Advisor during a one-on-one consultation
- An oil and filter change
- Rotation and inspection of all four tires

Gallinger Ford 50th
MILTON est. 1967 LINCOLN
a nice place to do business

655 MAIN STREET E., MILTON

www.gallingerford.com

905-875-FORD (3673)

