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Is virtual reality the new **REAL**

By Erik Furtado | Oct. 20, 2022

Virtual reality is quickly evolving and we may soon see some new innovations that will affect our normal lives as we know it changing our reality to something a bit more digital.

Many are scared with the idea of a full-blown virtual takeover, and something like this is still years away from happening, however it is a possibility that we will most likely see something close to a science fiction movie in our lifetime. The idea of an interactive virtual reality within our own reality is becoming less and less sci-fi and more real as development done by major companies such as Meta, Apple, Neuralink owned by Elon Musk, and even Google are progressing to-

wards this integration of machine and human.

As of right now Virtual reality is seen as nothing more than video games or artificial experiences, but soon enough we may see more effects to the real world such as glasses that give overlays of information as you walk, or full-on brain chips embedded in you linking your brain and nerves with machines allowing for a bridge between virtual and reality. That has been the main goal of companies such as Neuralink who is

"Developing ultra-high bandwidth brain-machine interfaces to connect humans and computers." The population seems to be very split on the idea of going half-cyborg, but the option remains in development. Before really thinking about the future, we must first look at what is currently available and assess from there what a future with virtual reality might look like. Originally companies such as Oculus, HTC, and Sony branched off into virtual reality with a heavy focus on VR video

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How Time Online Can Affect Your **MENTAL HEALTH**

**A Psychology Professor's insight into
how technology effects **our mind**.**

Professor Jessica Fede, Ph. D, a psychology professor at Johnson & Wales University located in Providence, RI, sat down for online interview and gave a little insight into the goods and bads of the internet and how it has affected our brain.

Would you mind starting off with an introduction of yourself, a quick background of your field and your occupation?

My name is Jessica Fede, I am a professor at Johnson and Wales. I'm in the Psychology department and it's my 9th year here. I teach courses in, theories and techniques, and school and career counseling. I teach intro phsysc, abnormal psychology, personality, and a neural science course. My master is from Boston College in Educational Psychology and my CAGS and PhD are from the University of Massachusetts.

With how often society uses technology on a day-to-day basis, have researchers discovered any evidence of its effect on a person's mental health?

Yeah, so there is a lot of research coming out right now, even here at Johnson & Wales, Professor Rosenthawl and her team have put a lot of work together on the effect of social media and effect on cell phones. In my Intro to Psych class, I have my students watch "The Social Dilemma" which is a documentary on the negative effects of technology, cell phones, Instagram, Facebook, on mental health. And we know that individuals that check their phones a lot or are constantly on Facebook are negatively affected and you actually get more depressed because people just post all the good things going on in their life.

Is there an effect on a person's physical health?

Oh, that's a great question. I think when we're on social media and we're constantly on our computers and phones people aren't as physically active as they used to be. We know especially children are constantly playing video games. We know there's been an increase in diabetes obesity especially in children and we know with the pandemic people use technology a lot more and we're seeing some negative effects of that as well.

Is there a higher risk to younger online users to develop issues with their mental or physical health?

Yeah so, I have a small private practice and I do work a lot with children and families, and I think even nowadays a lot of issues, whether it be bullying issues or friendship issues, a lot of it doesn't even start in school anymore, a lot of it starts over the computer. Whether it's not getting invited to a party and someone finds out because their friend posted, or who they thought was their friend posted on Instagram, but there's been a lot of issues that have just been started bullying issues just over technology.

Are there benefits to someone's health who spend a lot of time online?

You know I think there are some benefits. I think for some kids who have a hard time connecting in person with people, it provides them an opportunity. I will also tell you as a mental health provider, prior to the pandemic we weren't allowed to do telehealth and get reimbursed from telehealth from insurance companies. Now however, we're able to get reimbursed for doing telehealth, so I do think with technology it's really helps people with mental health issues because people who prior wouldn't get any mental health

services can now get some treatment because of telehealth.

Would you recommend a certain amount of time to spend online?

The Academy of Pediatrics have some very strict guidelines about how long an individual should be on the computer or on technology. I think a lot of times technology has served, for at least for parents, if you go out for dinner, you often see kids on their computers, on their iPads, but I do think they you should we should be limiting the amount of technology kids have so they can develop social skills. They obviously don't develop over the computer, they need to be taught, they need to be practiced, they need to be rehearsed. So the Academy of Pediatrics came out with some strict guidelines around iPhone use and they're saying now the average of 8-10 year olds spent almost 8 hours a day on various media and the Academy of Pediatrics is calling for a decrease in that.

Does what someone uses online, such as social media, shopping online, searching on google, have different effects on people's mental health?

Yeah, I think when we look at that I think people who are constantly on social media have lower attention spans. There's also increased risk for privacy, risk for depression, obesity, failing grades, bullying, and it effects social interactions. But I do think some of the positive effects are media in general and being online are that it can help children learn whether they're playing with different educational apps or whether they're watching some kind of documentary online. I know too in schools there has been use of technology for different computer programs reading programs, math programs, that can help kids they work on it and the computer at school and then they

can just log in at home. And society is really moving towards, even during the pandemic, a surge in the use of technology and how they use technology, so I do think it's important for kids from the beginning to learn how to use technology. Technology can also help kids learn to problem solve and look up answers if they don't know them, they can go to Google and figure out how to problem solve.

Any advice to people that may be experiencing negative effects of the internet?

I would tell them to limit their amount of exposure on the Internet. On iPhones now you have tracking apps of just how long you've been on your phone, and I would encourage people to look to see where they are and try to decrease a little bit each week. I would also ask people to, like we talk about therapy a lot, replacement behaviors. What else can they do in replace of always being on their computer. Can you go out and take a walk? Can you call a friend? Can you knit? Can you bake? Can you find some other pleasure to fill that time rather than just being on social media.

Is it already a problem or do you see the internet becoming a problem for people's health?

I think society as a whole, we're becoming more and more in our bubbles, and more and more people are turning to technology, and using technology in our daily lives. Even zoom, you no longer sometimes even have to go into the office, so I do think technology is, due to the pandemic, has even taken on a bigger role in our lives and looking at computer screens all day. So, I do think we got to be careful, and I think technology can be good, but it has a place in society, so finding the right place for it I think is really important.

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