

‘Digital Hygiene’

Dr. Avinash Dsouza

This subject is a little different, but which I firmly believe in and which I want to discuss with you. I believe this is very relevant for all of you. Most of us are digitally connected whether it is on media or sites that we chat or the internet. My main aim in coming here is to speak about something called ‘Digital Hygiene’. Social media is what we all use but what we post on social media is important. If you look at various posts on social media they start with the good morning posts, then they post something about the day with some quotes and then we have some posts on social media which are not needed, like going for a bath, people post that on ‘Facebook’ and we have people replying like, use hot water, ‘use soap and cold water’, The thing is that his family probably doesnot know that he is going for a bath, but his friend in Canada knows that he is going for a bath. Now the reason I am speaking about ‘Digital Hygiene’ is because it is something that would bind us and it is also about family relationships that come into play.

Social Media has connected us to our friends who are staying abroad and family members with whom we are not into touch. But the problem is, even as family members we communicate far more on ‘What’s App’ groups than we communicate face to face. So very often if we are in a hurry to go to college or work in the morning and we want to say something to our parents, our brother or sister and if it is a family event, we put in on the group where all will see it, everyone is expected to discuss it and get back, Even very often if we have to communicate from one room to another we communicate via a ‘What’s App’ group. Digital Media has tossed out sanctity from our relationships.

These devices are very important. There is a phenomenon called *nomophobia*, which means the fear that you develop when you walk out

of your house or you go to work or college for whatever reasons and you leave your phone at home. The fear is that if I don't have my phone how will I be connected. The bigger problem is, if you don't have your phone and someone else sees the phone, then all is lost.

Then there is the danger of losing all your contacts on the phone. I belong to an era which is partly digital and partly not digital, so we used to use telephone diaries in which we would write down numbers, now we are totally dependent on the phone. We can also recover information that is stored in the phone.

The phone is often a mirror of a person's personality. A lot can be surmised from the kind of phone they have, the cover they use, the kind of accessories they put on the phone and many more things. So I believe that digital discipline starts there and when we talk about digital families and digital people, it is very important that we learn to move away from the digital world and come together as human beings. This is because I have seen people not speaking to each other. They go to any café or restaurant and you will see people not talking to those with them, but talking on their phones. Even on a date the couple will be busy on their mobiles. It is not uncommon to see that in the middle of the conversation, someone suddenly picks up the phone and starts looking at it, rather than looking at the person in front of them.

Before the onslaught of digital media families were more closely knit. They would be happier, they would see the digital world together, that is digital hygiene. What has happened today is that everyone shies away from each other. When we were young we actually played sports which were contact sports like football, hockey and a lot of things we enjoyed on our own. Recently, a mother informed me that her son played football, hockey, tennis and I said it was very good and then she added, on the iPad. To that I added, that it was not so good.

Without realizing, we are so caught up with our digital devices that we move away from what is normal. This is what happens in most of the gardens, people are on the phone and forced to go. Parents believe that

it is important for their growth and I refuse to accept that. I strongly believe that the playschool has resulted in something that I call 'digital torture'

I had a father who visited my clinic for his son who needed help. The father was playing 'Candy Crush' in the waiting room and when his turn came he asked for the next patient to be sent in. After the second and the third patient had finished, I insisted that he should come in. He entered my room but continued to play. He said, I could talk to my son until he finished his game. That was the extent of his dependency on 'Candy Crush'.

Take 'What's App' for that matter, it is a very good, useful tool for communication. Doctors also use it. We get a lot of information on it. But at the same time there is a need to check it every time it beeps, we check the message that comes. Even at three am when people wake up to go to the washroom, they check their 'What's App' message. There are terms that are commonly used, for example, 'lol', laugh out loud, but these abbreviations are ruining the language. *Emoji's* are replacing emotions, people do not laugh or cry but they are very happy to send *emoji's*.

Digital hygiene is when you respect every human being. There are videos that are x-rated, games which are destructive, but young and old are addicted to them. Social Media has such a vast network and many individuals are on more than one social media. They are not only on *Facebook*, or *What's App* but also on *Instagram*. Caution is advised while using them.

Times are changing fast. In our time, we had gardens in this age you have '*Gardening*' which is game on digital media. In our time we wrote letters and used the '*post box*' to drop our letters. Today we have '*mail boxes*', that is the difference. What has happened is that many of us have lost touch with the real world and live in cyber space. When people misplace their phones they react in different ways, 73% panic 14% are highly

desperate and 4% - 7% fall sick. This is not good for one's mental wellbeing.

Facebook can become an addiction when many people seek approval on what they post. One thing about *Facebook* is which all of you should be worried about is that there are a large number of people on *Facebook* who are below the age of 10 years and who don't know how to use *Facebook* but are using it. Very soon people develop addictions. There are people who have to buy something everyday online and if they don't buy something online then they are not happy. There are others who have to see a certain amount of Netflix everyday, if they don't watch a movie, they are not happy. I have to warn you about an epidemic called informacity. There's a huge amount of information available online and often individuals do not know the amount of information that is available about them.

Selfie is a word that is there in the Oxford dictionary now, because it is a part of our life. These are different types of selfies people take. Selfie with their pet it is called *petsie*. Selfie in the morning when you are not good looking is *ugly selfie*. Selfie with the money you want is the *wealthy selfie*. While taking selfies is very popular, there is a phenomenon for death by selfie people called *Selficide*. It is the act of accidentally dying while trying to snap that perfect selfie. While that photo of you swimming next to a shark might get some serious likes, you, unfortunately, won't be around to enjoy them. India has the largest number of selfie related deaths.

The last thing I would like to mention is the use of pornography. As a Psychiatrist, let me tell you this, seeing adult content as a adolescent is not what I consider abnormal if it is done once in a while, but if its something that is done daily, then that is a problem. So if you come across people, who are addicted to pornography please see that they seek help. There is also *Sexting* that is popular. It is the activity of sending text messages that are about sex or intended to sexually excite

someone. By indulging in such activity people try to gain cheap popularity.

To sum up here is the paradox of our age.

We have larger houses but smaller families, more conveniences but less time, more degrees but less sense, more knowledge but less judgement, more experts but also have more problems, more medicines but are less healthy. We have been to the moon and back but have no time to meet our neighbour. We become more on quantity but short on quality, this is the time of fast food, but slow digestion. It is a time when we have so much on *Window*, but nothing in the room.