

BRAIN ROT: THE IMPACT ON YOUNG ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

We've all experienced that foggy feeling after a late night and little sleep. It's hard to focus. Productivity wanes. We can feel agitated, anxious, negative, even depressed. If drinking or drug use was involved the night before, we might feel even more lethargic and disoriented.

These days, many of us experience these feelings, even when we get enough rest and don't drink too much. Endless hours in front of our phones and computer screens are causing digital information overload. The result is brain rot, which can have far-reaching effects on young adult mental health.

What Is Brain Rot?

Brain rot, sometimes written as one word, "brainrot", is a state of mental foggy and cognitive decline that results from excessive screen engagement. Is brainrot real? It's not a medically recognized condition, but it is a real phenomenon.

When we spend hours surfing and scrolling, we consume huge quantities of meaningless data, negative news, and perfectly retouched photos of friends and celebrities that make us feel inadequate. Trying to absorb and cope with massive amounts of content creates mental fatigue. And that can lead to a drop in motivation, focus, productivity, and energy over time, especially in young people.

What Causes Brain Rot?

Brain rot is caused by excessive technology use. That might mean binge-watching videos on YouTube, scrolling social media, or switching back and forth among various browser tabs. On top of that, you might be simultaneously surfing the Internet, texting, and checking your email. The end result: You're overstimulating your brain. And when you're digitally inundating yourself with too much information, you're at risk of brain rot.

Scrolling through social media platforms spikes the neurochemical dopamine, which produces feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. The more you do it, the more you want to do it. Your brain associates scrolling with a feeling of

gratification, even when you're aware of its negative consequences. In this way, scrolling can become a behavioral addiction.

Examples of Brain Rot Behavior

Brain rot behavior comes in various forms, including:

Video gaming: While it's possible to game without getting addicted, some gamers play compulsively and develop gaming disorder. They become so entranced by video games' alternate worlds, fanciful characters, and complicated plots that they can have difficulty functioning in other areas of life.

Zombie scrolling: This brain rot behavior refers to mindless habitual scrolling with no destination in mind or benefit derived. When zombie scrolling, you vacantly stare at your smart phone as you flit from one feed to another.

Doomscrolling: Doomscrolling involves searching for distressing information and negative news. Doomscrollers feel an overwhelming desire to be up to date on the latest information, even when it's disturbing.

Social media addiction: Social media addiction is characterized by a persistent urge to check social media and a feeling of restlessness when you try to break the habit. Users can't stop checking platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Constant notifications, bright colors, and stimulating sounds can literally mesmerize them, causing them to stop thinking clearly.

How Brain Rot Behavior Affects Young Adults' Mental and Emotional Well-Being

On the surface, spending a lot of time on your smartphone or in front of a computer may seem harmless. Over the long term, however, brain rot behavior can damage your well-being mentally and emotionally.

Activities like doomscrolling affect the brain's reward system. That's because humans tend to prioritize and remember negative information more than positive. So landing on another distressing piece of news prompts the search for more disheartening information.

Doomscrolling can desensitize people to negative stimuli, making it harder for them to experience positive feelings or derive pleasure in other ways. One study showed that doomscrolling may lead to higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of mental well-being. Another found that people who have high levels of negative news consumption also have poorer mental and even physical health.

The Impact of Brain Rot Behavior on Young Adults' Cognition

Research has shown that the Internet can produce acute and sustained alterations in cognition related to attention and memory, which may be reflected in changes in the brain's gray matter.

Repeated scrolling can have a negative effect on individuals' mental faculties by disrupting the brain's capacity to encode and retain information. As well, constant overstimulation can lead to a reduced attention span.

For example, according to a study of 1,051 young adults between 18 and 27 years old, social media addiction has a significant negative association with executive functioning skills such as planning, organization, problem-solving, decision-making, and working memory.

What Brain Rot Behavior Does to Young Adults' Self-Concept

Self-concept is also affected by brain rot. As the number of social interactions that occur on social networking sites has exploded, the online world has become its own social universe, especially for young adults. How many "friends," "followers," or "likes" you have is visible for all to see, making it easy to fall prey to the comparison trap.

In addition, the bombardment of posts flaunting people's professional successes, exotic vacations, blissful relationships, and picture-perfect bodies (often digitally manipulated with filters) can lead to negative self-talk. The brain becomes so cluttered by the constant overstimulation that it struggles to parse out truth from fiction. Self-worth can suffer, leading to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

How to Prevent Brain Rot

Preventing brain rot requires that being intentional about your media consumption. Your mental health and emotional well-being are likely to improve when you control your screen engagement. Some of the best strategies include:

Set Limits on Screen Time

Start by tracking how much time you spend browsing, scrolling social media, watching videos, and gaming. You may be shocked to discover just how much time you invest in digital pursuits.

Next, set boundaries around the number of hours you sit in front of screens each day. Delete distracting apps from your phone. Turn off notifications for news and social media. And don't consume content right before bed. As you limit your screen time, notice how you feel.

Curate Your Feeds

Protect your headspace by being mindful of what you consume. Don't succumb to sensationalistic and negative news. Diversify your media sources so you maintain a more balanced world perspective. Furthermore, unfollow accounts that regularly generate angry or anxious feelings. Populate your feeds with positive content that uplifts and inspires you.

Pursue Non-Digital Interests

There's a huge world beyond your screen. Reacquaint yourself with it by digging into hobbies and activities you enjoy. Go camping. Listen to music. Play an instrument or learn one. Write in a journal. Volunteer for an organization you believe in. Exercise. Practice yoga or meditation. Structure time each day to do things that make you happy and calm.

Connect Offline with Positive People

Your first instinct may be to pick up your phone to connect with others. Instead, make an effort to socialize with people in the real world. Developing and nourishing authentic connections with supportive friends, family, and colleagues in person lowers stress and provides a deeper sense of belonging. One survey of 18- to 25-year-olds found that young adults had the lowest levels of depressive symptoms when they enjoyed more offline emotional support.

Strengthen Your Mind

If you're concerned your mind could be turning to mush, challenge it. The mind is like a muscle. It grows with exertion. Rather than scrolling, learn a foreign language or a new technical skill. Study a philosophical concept that expands your worldview. Sharpen your mind with mathematical or word puzzles. Develop your writing ability or read about a period in history you know nothing about. Resist the urge to slide into comfort scrolling. Retrain your brain instead.

Do a Digital Detox

Limiting screen time is good, but unplugging completely gives non-stop thinking a rest. It also allows you to become more aware of your thoughts, perceptions, and habits. One study found that taking just seven days off social media significantly increased perceived mental well-being, as compared to seven days of social media use.

A digital detox can take different forms. Start by taking short breaks from technology, by unplugging for 15 minutes at a time. Gradually extend that time, or take more frequent breaks. Go out with friends and agree beforehand not to look at your phones the whole time. Work up to taking a day trip—and keep your phone off the whole time.

Get Support

If you sense that your brain rot has grown into a more serious problem, reach out for support. Don't isolate behind a screen where you may develop a full-blown digital addiction. Enlist the services of a therapist or counselor who can help you face your issue, develop healthy habits, manage triggers, and set realistic goals.

Source: <https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/co-occurring-disorders/brain-rot/>

- 1- De modo geral, o texto é sobre: (1,0)
 - a- As causas e efeitos do *brainrot*.
 - b- Os impactos na saúde mental dos jovens.
 - c- A definição de *brainrot* e os impactos na saúde mental.
 - d- As características do *brainrot* e o que fazer a respeito.

- 2- Qual a melhor tradução para o termo *brainrot*? (1,0)
 - a- Podridão cerebral
 - b- Cérebro podre
 - c- Cérebro deteriorado
 - d- Mente podre

- 3- Segundo o texto, o que é *brainrot*? (1,0)
 - a- Uma doença
 - b- Uma síndrome
 - c- Um fenômeno
 - d- Uma condição

- 4- Marque duas características de vídeo games de acordo com o texto: (1,0)
 - a- Mundos alternativos e caracteres cheios de fantasias.
 - b- Enredos complicados e dificuldade de funcionamento.
 - c- Mundos alternados e funcionamento em outras áreas da vida.
 - d- Enredos complicados e personagens fantasiosos.

- 5- O que não é uma característica do vício às redes sociais? (1,0)
 - a- Checar as últimas notificações
 - b- Ficar apático
 - c- Parar de pensar claramente
 - d- Ficar encantado

- 6- Escolha a opção incorreta sobre os efeitos do *doomscrolling*: (1,0)
 - a- Sensibilidade a estímulos negativos e dificuldade de ter experiências positivas
 - b- Angústia e má saúde mental

- c- Saúde física debilitada e baixos níveis de bem estar
- d- Baixos níveis de bem estar e necessidade de estar diariamente informado

7- Essas habilidades são afetadas pela rolagem de página, exceto:

- a- Organização e retenção de informação
- b- Codificação de informação e solução de problemas
- c- Tomada de decisão e nível de atenção
- d- Criatividade e escolha de conteúdos

8- O que significa o verbo frasal *parse out* na frase “*The brain becomes so cluttered by the constant overstimulation that it struggles to parse out truth from fiction*”? (1,0)

- a- organizar
- b- analisar
- c- aprender
- d- sintetizar

9- De acordo com o texto, a prevenção do *brainrot* envolve as seguintes ações, exceto: (1,0)

- a- Controlar o tempo de tela e socializar
- b- Diversificar mídias e atividades
- c- Consultar um psiquiatra e fazer um retiro
- d- Fazer intervalos e nutrir conexões autênticas

10- Qual a melhor tradução para a expressão *full-blown* no último parágrafo? (1,0)

- a- Desabrochada
- b- Madura
- c- Completa
- d- Desenvolvida