

Interdisciplinary & Transdisciplinary Approaches



International Journal of Fear Studies
Vol. 2 (1)
2020

Published by the In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute
& The Fearology Institute ©2020

Constant Cravings

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From browsing social media to watching videos, chatting with friends and calling-up apps for services and information on-line, studies suggest some humans invest about 8 hours a day in their devices—not including surfing-hours when unable to sleep. If you've come to depend-on and crave more immediacy, convenience and comfort, here's a catch-22 that just might help you curb your enthusiasm.

A wearable device called Nettox—as per the term dettox, is being developed by an inventor at the U of Indonesia. When worn on the wrist, this product— containing a pulse oximeter sensor— measures the hemoglobin, oxygen levels and your heart rate (HRV). Why? Scientists have found that prolonged mobile phone usage has a specific lowering effect on the human system, so when HRV levels fall within a concerning range, Nettox emits a sound reminding the wearer to stop using their phone.

.....and if you catch yourself thinking you should be drinking more water? Then you may be interested in what today's tech-world has on the market. Simply log-in your water intake on an Apple Watch app called 'WaterMinder'— a product designed to help create new and healthy habits that might just motivate you to stay hydrated.

A host of other companies are in on this information explosion as well—like Bell for example— exploring how to offer you a better ride by creating road-condition-monitoring technology on your smart-phone. This app will measure speed, location, vibration and weather—so you don't have to. And how about 'Livestock Labs' currently manufacturing a fit-bit for cows. This device monitors body temperature and heart rate to detect early signs of disease. It's hoped this product will soon be available to diagnose human health concerns.

Tamara Banbury, a PhD candidate studying voluntary cyborgs (users of experimental technology to augment and enhance life) thinks "life will become even more exciting when we stop creating applications for mobile phones and start creating apps for our bodies. All it will take is to implant a couple of microchips somewhere in your body and important information and knowledge originating from the senses will be unlocked."

I'm not all this tech savvy, however a curious part in me is often impressed with what my brother and sister humans are accomplishing with an amazing variety of new devices at their beck and call. I also admit to having a significant amount of distress around how the new techno-tools seem to be taking over people's lives and stealing what little free attention many have left. Sure, advancement in technology and social media makes carrying-on business, studies, travel, shopping and communication easier than ever before—but at what cost ?

It's becoming more challenging to watch our world undergo significant changes brought on by the AI revolution. 2019 studies show a 410% percent spike in chronic mental health issues, depression, burnout and anxiety compared to 2018. With less stigmatization around seeking health resources *via* AI, many take

action to improve their lives for the better—but what about the shocking number of millennials, Gen Z and others who've quit their jobs for mental health reasons, same story as above.....

In their first East-West Dialogue: *The Philosophy of Fearism* co-authored by R. Michael Fisher and Desh Subba—stress and mental health conditioning is linked with their specialties—Fearology and Fearing— another trend running parallel to the AI generation of analysis and solutions. Fisher suggests:

[W]e can no longer afford to fear what we don't know about what fear actually is, nor how harmful it is to our health and well-being. Fear is like racism, sexism and classism—a disease caused by trauma and unhealed painful memories.....and continues 'some say my critical fear analysis is too dark, negative, even somewhat nihilistic and pessimistic. It depends on what they mean and what reference they judge my work compared to others they find more optimistic. I won't go into that debate here except to say that I'm a critical thinker. I am not looking to make people feel happy and hopeful as a primary goal. [p. 111]

'No worries' Dr. Fisher....I mean just how happy and hopeful can a human be, when every system in their body is saturated in unhealed painful memories—and their symptoms garner more attention than the root causes?

I think we must concern ourselves with how acts of self-reflection, self-care and self-regulation are faring amidst the tonnes of techno-distraction humans face each moment of their day.

Enter Ken Wilber—an American teacher-writer known for his work in transpersonal psychology and integral philosophy. In his four quadrant model of human development, he suggests humans thrive when we merge the inner with the outer aspects of our lives. Sorry to say, I've met few who've actually pondered what this might mean for their life, have entertained a proposal of this sort—or given sufficient thought to embarking on such an adventure. In fact, had my employment with a large corporation not been terminated in the late 80's, I may not have either!

A major tipping-point in my individuation(healing-learning-changing-growing) process was discovering I'd been gifted with a community of 'inner residents' (psychic parts/identities, thoughts, feelings and behaviours). Some were fearful of engagement while others simply disappeared now and then. Even though the lights were on, many of my 'inner rezzies' were not home!

No doubt you've heard the term FOMO—fear of missing out. It was in a conscious community building process at the In Search of Fearlessness' collective in Calgary where I was introduced to Scott Peck's work— *A Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (1987). Here, some of my more curious inner rezzies began showing-up—seemingly ready to explore the eclectic menu of 'fear vaccines' being offered. Together we invested many delightful and painstaking hours—individually and collectively—sharing stories of how we'd been hurt and survived. From this place of vulnerability, I was able to get to know and create a more respectful, trusting and fearless 'inner community' of relationships and ended up manifesting a healthy, more meaningful outer one as well.

In fact it didn't take long for a second FOMO—fear of moving on—to catch my attention when I became more aware of the shit-

load of baggage I'd yet to unpack from earlier excursions in my life. And so it was that my interest in social media was eclipsed by what I consider a healthier compulsion— to explore my own 'devices'.

Cue: ' A Better Mood'. While writing this piece, I came across this ad in *People* magazine: "Check-in with how you're feeling with short, mindful activities and tune into to your emotions. Download, stop, breath and think— for free". Wait.....what—you can download this kind of thing from the Apple App store or get it on Google Play? You mean I just blew 40+ years devoting significant time and energy learning to navigate life with what I consider the most exquisite of GPS's—the one behind my eyes?

Thankfully, there seems to be a growing interest in developing what may be considered "soft skills." These include various kinds of communication, empathy, mindfulness, creativity, collaboration and leadership. Many workplace experts predict these abilities will assist employees to differentiate themselves from their peers and provide a 'leg-up' for those applying for work.

No matter where we find ourselves—health-conscious blue or white collar, scholar, practitioner, educator, politician, therapist or artist—its highly desirable we ask if *every* experience in life needs to be captured, publicly displayed and documented on social media —or used in algorithms to manipulate our attention, then stored as meta-data for who knows who in the future?

The next time you notice yourself putting-off self-care or neglecting to fulfill tasks and goals you've set for yourself in lieu of cyber-loafing, give this little personal, research project a shot.....

Close your eyes. Withdraw inwardly to yourself. Slip-on your natural 'seatbelt'.....your breath. Notice coolness at your nostrils as you inhale and the warmth of your breath on exhalation. Hang-in here for a bit, sensing where and how each breath meets the next similar to the railcars of a train rumbling along, one connected to another.

Seize this moment for a felt-sense of your body temperature. You may be heating-up and/or sweating..... or feel the need to shiver, shake or tremble. Might there be a yawn or 2 ready to roll-out? Continue to check-in with yourself here. A part of you might even be thinking this is nuts—or at least amusing—and with that notice a chuckle or two yearning to bubble-up and out..... even a whimper or boohoo may show-up as a variety of accumulations find their way through the system.

Fear missing out or moving forward? Don't take my word for it. Just continue attending to your 'inner rezzies' as they come calling. With these simple acts of refreshment, you'll eventually contradict any compulsion to count-on a device for inner awareness and head to the tap/water cooler on your own!

Initially it may seem near-impossible to live w/o AI equipment. As with anything, baby-steps in new directions can be catalysts to discovering inner information and resources you never knew you had. Relying on your *inner* 'data' and natural ability to be in-sync with it— is your birth-right.....I mean who'd you rather trust—a giant tech company who's created a facial recognition system for your phone that can't tell the difference between a live human and a photograph--or the evidence of your senses? May the Force be with you.

BIO

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