



Brain Rot: Causes, Consequences and Possible Preventive Method

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1. Introduction: Changing Scenario

Only 15 years ago, our fellow passengers used to read either a newspaper or a book during their travels on a train or on a bus. If not so, they at least used to engage themselves through healthy discussion on relevant topics of that time. The people then had enough time at their disposal to enjoy the outside nature during their travel. But do we notice such pictures nowadays in a bus or on a train? The answer is very little or even not at all.

Now, the question arises, what has replaced this common phenomenon? Perhaps most of us now rightly guess that those golden moments of the past have been replaced by smartphones. Unfortunately, we travel hours on a train or on a bus or on any other transportation without even looking through the window for a single time, being too busy with our smartphones! We boast ourselves for belonging to a fast-forwarding digital world. But despite being digitally connected to the world through the internet, we are gradually losing the warmth of physical connection with the people near to us. We are hardly living in the present. We are physically present, but our mind is roaming somewhere else. Naturally, loneliness is gradually engulfing us. Now, let us take a day-to-day example to illustrate this point. Suppose a group of four friends are having their tea in a college canteen. Are they really enjoying each other's company? We often notice that they are not attentive to each other; instead, they are busy chatting with someone else who is sitting hundreds, or even miles away from them, or busy watching some Instagram or YouTube reels of ten seconds where a cat is playing a piano. Though they are physically occupying four seats in the canteen, mentally they are far, far away from that canteen! This is a real sign of concern.



On the contrary, now, the common sight is that eight out of ten passengers scroll various social media platforms on their smartphones. Many of them are laughing loudly out of the blue; a different world altogether! Now, if someone, irrespective of his or her age, is reading a book on a local train, we are likely to get shocked. Even for digital cravings, we take out our smartphone, click a picture of the scene and post it on any of the digital platforms for likes and comments, adding “Rare Scene!” as a caption. To give an example, a few days back I saw a young boy about twenty was reading a book on a Howrah-Midnapore local train. I developed an immense admiration for the boy since he was an exception to this generation, the generation that has nearly lost the habit of reading. The fact of the matter is that nowadays our smart phone has made us so smart that we are appreciating something erstwhile a very common sight!

Anyone would hardly disagree with the fact that smartphones are nearly the oxygen for us. In other words, we are now living on smartphones. Can you just imagine a day, or even a few hours, without your smartphone? If you can, congratulations to you! You are a rare specimen of this generation. But in most cases, if you ask somebody to spend a few hours on the banks of a river without his/her smartphone, irrespective of being so close to nature, he/she will definitely be bored after a few minutes or so. Have you ever noticed that we hardly forget to take our smartphones with us each time we go out? But, quite surprisingly, sometimes we forget our wallet! Such an endearing friend our smartphones have become over the years! Our love for such friends is so addictive that we are no longer in the driving seat; instead, we are driven by an invisible force, consciously or unconsciously. The consequences of such addiction are immense, and they are negatively affecting us, irrespective of our age, mentally, physically, socially, and even so heavily that it is getting tougher day by day to bring us back to our natural track. Now, let us discuss the new phenomenon “brain rot” and its pernicious effects on our lives as a whole.

2. What is ‘Brain Rot’?

In his 1854 book *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau used the term “brain rot” for the first time. However, the word came into the light when it became the 2024 Oxford word of the year, which is defined as, “the supposed deterioration of a person’s mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content)

considered trivial or unchallenging. Also, something characterised as likely to lead to such deterioration”. (1) As it is clearly defined, the term ‘brain rot’ is the destruction of our intellectual and cognitive power due to the overconsumption of low content on various social media platforms. Literally, the word means the degradation of our brain.

3. Causes and Consequences of Brain Rot:

3.1 Causes:

3.1.1 Overconsumption of Low-Quality Content and Dooms Scrolling

Spending countless hours on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, tik-Tok etc. is one of the primary reasons for the cognitive decline or “brain rot”. We engage ourselves in mindless scrolling and surfing; consume a huge quantity of low content, negative news and many such other useless content that force us to question our adequacy and sometimes, authenticity. Gradually, this overconsumption leads to mental disorder and psychological distress, ultimately affecting our mental well-being.

3.1.2 Lack of Reading and Writing:

The other reason for “brain rot” is definitely the lack of reading and writing. In one of her editorial episodes of “Between the Lines”, aired on The Firstpost, Palki Sharma Upadhyay addresses serious concerns over the lack of reading among the present generations when she poses some pertinent questions on this topic. She asks, “When was the last time you picked up a book? When was the last time you spent hours? No phones, no TVs, no distractions, just pure blissful reading?” She further continues, “For some of us, the answer may be yesterday, or in fact, even today. But for some people, the answer is days, months or even years. The age-old pastime of flipping pages seems long gone. Reading has met its untimely demise. The books are gathering dust. Book stores are shutting their shops. Libraries are replaced by the internet”. (2) The young generations are not reading enough. They do not enjoy it. They consider reading as a futile task. Reading is just not in pace with this world, they believe. The crisis of reading is worldwide. As a result of that, the famous publication houses are rapidly shutting their stores. After the pandemic, those who are reading are either reading self-help books or listening to audiobooks. Like reading, writing too has become a dead art.

3.1.3 Lack of Physical Activities

A sound mind is only achievable if we have a sound body. Unfortunately, our generation spends more time on social media than on the playground. Instead, they are addicted to video-gaming. Late rising has become the trend of the hour. We spend hours at night on various social media platforms, leading us to sleep till late in the morning. This habit is gradually robbing us not only of our time and sleep but also it is taking a heavy toll on our health. Like our brain, our body too demands cosiness. It does not encourage us to get out of bed on a wintry morning for a walk or run. As a result of that, we are facing serious mental, physical, social and economic challenges in our lives. Let us discuss what kind of challenges we are facing due to such a phenomenon, “brain rot”.

3.2 Consequences:

3.2.1 Mental Fogginess

As the very term “brain rot” suggests, the carnal affected area of it is our brain. “Brain rot” is a kind of mental fogginess, a state of mental exhaustion. Gradually, we are losing our mental clarity, the power of the mind to control anything intellectually and rationally. As a result of that, our mind is gradually losing the potential to do any activity requiring patience. It is becoming the slave of our passion without having any command over it. Surprising thing is that, it is not its fault. We are solely responsible for this. We are feeding our brains without letting them do anything. In other words, it is getting its food for no work. And gradually it has become accustomed to this process. It is, thus, rusted, exactly like a bicycle or a spade becomes due to being unused for a long period of time.

Let’s take an example. You need to finish a very important assignment by tomorrow. But your brain, which has completely lost its capacity to work, will leave no stone unturned to convince you not to do the work immediately. It will try to establish the fact that there is enough time at your hand and eventually leads you to engage yourself in something that requires no active participation. So, what will you do then? You will be directed to take up your smartphone and engage in random scrolling on social media platforms. And by doing that, you are listening to the command of your brain, which urges you to feed it by providing it with substances that



quench its instant gratification. Thus, instead of mastering your brain, you have become the slave of its whimsical nature. A perfect example of the master becoming the slave!

3.2.2 Effect on Attention Span:

Brain rot has alarmingly decreased attention span. Have you ever noticed that many of us cannot watch even a movie that is two hours long! The primary reason for it is our excessive proneness towards short videos and reels on various social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Our brain needs instant gratification that can be served by a series of short videos of ten seconds or so. Naturally, we are becoming impatient with anything. We show our anger, frustration and anxiety very often. Not only the children and young adults, but also the older ones are equally affected by this mental instability. Studies shown that children prone to this digital affinity are likely to develop their cognitive development later.

3.2.3 Lack of Decision Making and Setting No Definite Goal in Life

One wrong decision in your life can break you into pieces. Naturally, taking the right decision in life is one of the fundamental aspects of our lives. Unfortunately, our mind has become so fragile due to this phenomenon called “brain rot” that it is almost incapable to take decisive decision. We are always in doubt about making any decision, no matter how important that decision might be. Gradually, we are losing our mental clarity and cognitive power, which is essential to take any decision, big or small. As a result of that, we don’t have specific goals to fulfil. Our present generation is like a ship without its rudder.

3.2.4 Sleep Hazards, Depression and Other Diseases

Depression is a very common phenomenon of our age. Spending too much time scrolling and consuming such baser contents derail them from their goals in life, if they have any. Naturally, in this fast-paced, competitive world, they feel anxious, that lead them to other serious mental issues like depression and hypertension. Suicide rates among the youths are all time high. Their minds have become so vulnerable that they are not capable of handling pressure, and hence, end their lives cheaply.

3.2.5 Stained Relationships, Reel and Detachment from Nature

Excessive social media consumption forces us to compare our lives with those of the lives displayed in fancy reels and filtered photos and videos on various social media platforms. Unfortunately, we consider our real lives as the worst life God can ever offer us. As a result of that, the relationship with our partners is always at stake as failing to match our expectations with reality. We are moved by the display of fake lives on social media and expect such in our lives too, with little or no knowledge about the actual reality. Divorce rates are increasing day by day. Adjustment in a relationship, nowadays, is an anathema to us. Our relationship with friends and other family members, too, is at the lowest ebb. Gradually, we are becoming isolated from family, friends and ultimately, from our own selves. Everywhere in social media, we see a rat race is going on for material pleasures: expensive gifts and sophisticated lifestyles. Show off culture is dictating terms nowadays. We are also gradually distancing ourselves from nature, our mother nature. Thus, leading a simple life is getting tougher and tougher gradually.

3.2.6 Erosion of Moral and Ethical Values

The lives of some social media influencers are immensely damaging the social fabric of our society by presenting a life that violates our social values. Excessive devouring of such content is immensely harmful, particularly for the younger generation. We have degraded ourselves to such a low level that we don't even bother to click a picture of the man dying on the street. Gradually, we are losing our fellow-feelings. Neighbours are our arch-rivals. Furthermore, the so-called influencers, with their perverted mindset, are stooping themselves day by day for views and comments.

4. Preventive Measures: Possible Way Outs

Now the question arises, can we get out of this loop or mental asylum? Fortunately, the answer is yes. There are some methods which can help us to prevent "brain rot". Here are some of the preventive measures that we can follow to lead a life full of activities and mindfulness.

4.1. Go Offline: Prioritise Sleep

- First of all, we need to **limit our screen time** as much as possible by setting a specific time for social media. Surely, it will not happen in a day. Gradually, we need to reduce our screen time.



- Sometimes, **we can stop recharging our prepaid data for a few days** to make ourselves uncomfortable. The other possible trick we can apply is that we can hide some of our popular apps like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube so that each time we tend to open them, we find it really hard to search for them.
- Again, if we keep some of our apps logged out, we will find it difficult to log in again. Our mind is basically very lazy. So, it might happen that you would not feel the urgency to open the app again.
- We need **to prioritise our sleep**. A sound sleep charges our energy for the entire day. For that, we should keep **our phones away for at least one hour before we sleep**.
- Similarly, we should stay away from our phones immediately after waking up. Our mind remains calm and energetic in the morning. But, no sooner do we start to check our phones after getting out, than we are controlled by the phone and our **mind is hijacked**.
- Instead, we should **make our to-do list for the whole day** and stick to the routine according to the list. Please remember, always begin the hardest thing first to challenge your brain.

4.2 Physical Exercise: Sports and Walking

- As we know, a sound body creates a sound mind. In this sense, **physical exercise is the key to keeping our mind and body fit and energetic**.
- Put yourself in **an uncomfortable zone to challenge your brain**.
- **Walking for 30 minutes a day can help us physically and mentally**. It improves our energy, reduces stress, stabilises heart rate, increases metabolism, lowers the risk of heart attack and does many such things for the betterment of our health.
- Instead of spending excessive time on social media platforms, we should engage ourselves in any kind of **sports requiring physical and mental engagement**.

4.3. Meditation

Meditation is one of the powerful tools for rewiring our brains. It improves our focus, helps us to get out of mental foggy and feeds our brains to do deep work. For both mental and physical health, the importance of Meditation is immense. It is one of the scientific methods to

live a happy and peaceful life. Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, though a tough read, can be read in this regard.

4.4 Early Rising: Own Your Morning

It is said and generally believed that morning shows the day. So, if you can win your morning, you can win the entire day. In his book *The 5 AM Club*, Robin Sharma has talked about how you can be much ahead of the day if you wake up at 5 a.m. every morning when most of the world is sleeping. Truly, the subtitle of the book goes "Own Your Morning, Elevate Your Life". The day is not small, we feel so since we start our day late. So, for every individual, it becomes imperative to start their day early. After all, **"Early to rise and early to bed makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise"**

4.4. Dopamine Detox

Dopamine is a **kind of pleasure-seeking hormone** that forces us to engage in spending countless hours on social media platforms by watching reels, low-quality content and negative news. In his book *Dopamine Detox: A Short Guide to Remove Distractions and Get Your Brain to Do Hard Things*, Thibaut Meurisse minutely describes how dopamine functions and what are the methods we can use to detox our dopamine and thus become a must-read book for everyone.

4.5. Read Books

We know that a reader lives a thousand lives. When you finish a book, you download the idea of a writer that took years for him/her to develop. Reading feeds our brains with fruitful ideas. It leads us to travel into unknown territories. Overall, a good book can change our perspective on life.

4.6. Start Journaling: Write Anything

Writing, like reading, as has already been discussed, has become a dead art. Pen and paper are too obsolete nowadays. The importance of writing is immense. **When we write, we live in the present. Writing makes our mind work faster, improves our memory, and is a powerful mode for rewiring our brain.** It is while writing that we open up our own selves, talk to our subconscious mind. Joseph Murphy, in his celebrated book, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*, has elaborated this idea further.



4.7. Try to Spend Time With Nature

Nature is a perennial source of inspiration. It heals us more than anything else. It produces happy hormones. In the book called *Ikigai*, the authors Héctor García and Francesc Miralles have shown the importance of staying close to nature for living a very healthy life.

4.8. Healthy Eating:

A balanced diet is one of the fundamental things for positive energy. Mindful eating improves our physical and mental health.

4.9. Practice Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the key. Brain rot robs our mindfulness. By practising meditation and by changing some simple habits, we can stay in the present. Again, we can immensely be benefited by the book *Ikigai* in respect of mindfulness.

References:

<https://corp.oup.com/news/brain-rot-named-oxford-word-of-the-year-2024/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrvqRD2x4uQ>

Recommended Reading:

Ikigai by Héctor García and Francesc Miralles

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Atomic Habit by James Clear

Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Power of Discipline by Daniel Walter

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind by Joseph Murphy

The Magic of Thinking Big by David Schwartz

You become What You Think by Subham Kumar Singh

The 5 AM Club by Robin Sharma