

## Google Syndrome A Serious Issue

**Author:** Letter to Editor

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**Abstract:** What is the Google syndrome? Today when students seek information and knowledge on any subject they head straight to their laptop, iPad or Smartphone and Google it. What a tremendous technology to educate and inform students on any topic instantaneously. Recent research pertaining to the human brain is now proving that students across all levels of education are now victims of the Google syndrome.

Memorization, comprehension, interpretation, application, synthesis, evaluation and problem solving are the cognitive thinking skills that are all being diminished. Empirical evidence uncovered by recent research on the brain is demonstrating abnormal cognition in brain development in students ranging from grade school to college. Similar to other muscles in the body if the brain is not exercised properly it will begin to atrophy. Many people make life choices that can destroy their brains such as engaging in the use of drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, the majority of people are not aware that when they do not use the regions of the brain that deal with cognitive intelligence it will have an adverse effect on their ability to reason, problem solve, critically think and to evaluate information.

The prevailing attitude toward literature, science and history appears to be "If I can Google it, I don't need to build a foundation of knowledge". Consequently students are not knowledgeable in many subjects. If one asks a technological question to our student body, one may think we have a generation of Einsteins. However, if one were to inquire about the Kennedy assassination and it's consequences on American history one would likely receive a blank stare and conclude otherwise.

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**Full text:** What is the Google syndrome? Today when students seek information and knowledge on any subject they head straight to their laptop, iPad or Smartphone and Google it. What a tremendous technology to educate and inform students on any topic instantaneously. Recent research pertaining to the human brain is now proving that students across all levels of education are now victims of the Google syndrome.

Unfortunately, students are now exhibiting the signs and symptoms related to this emerging abnormality. A syndrome is a group of signs and symptoms that occur together and characterize a particular abnormality. A dangerous precedent is evolving with the current generation that will have severe repercussions for posterity. The Google syndrome is depleting the part of the brain that deals with the higher cognitive levels of thinking. In order to develop these levels of thinking which deal with the ability of critical thought one must engage this sphere of the brain. For the majority of students using a search engine results in instant gratification. Get what you need to know, use it, lose it, be done with it. Move on. All knowledge is seconds away so why take the time and effort to learn it when at the next time of need you can again type it in the search bar?

Memorization, comprehension, interpretation, application, synthesis, evaluation and problem solving are the cognitive thinking skills that are all being diminished. Empirical evidence uncovered by recent research on the brain is demonstrating abnormal cognition in brain development in students ranging from grade school to college. Similar to other muscles in the body if the brain is not exercised properly it will begin to atrophy. Many people make life choices that can destroy their brains such as engaging in the use of drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, the majority of people are not aware that when they do not use the regions of the brain that deal with cognitive intelligence it will have an adverse effect on their ability to reason, problem solve, critically think and to evaluate information.

In many ways search engines like Google have diminished the ability to think independently. I firmly support using technology in the classroom; however not at the expense of creating a generation of people that do not

have the ability to think independently.

How can we begin to overcome the negative effects of under utilizing our brains and overusing the search bar? Schools must build a curriculum that demands students use their higher level cognitive skills. Until students learn the basics, build a foundation of knowledge and develop critical thinking skills they should not have use of the Internet.

Technology is an amazing tool if used in the proper way and American students are too dependent on it. The technological revolution of the 21st century has not paid off educationally. The increased usage has not translated into increased academic achievement. Among the western nations, the United States ranks near the bottom academically in all subjects and standardized tests. Yet we spend more money on students, computers and technology than any other western nation.

The prevailing attitude toward literature, science and history appears to be "If I can Google it, I don't need to build a foundation of knowledge". Consequently students are not knowledgeable in many subjects. If one asks a technological question to our student body, one may think we have a generation of Einsteins. However, if one were to inquire about the Kennedy assassination and it's consequences on American history one would likely receive a blank stare and conclude otherwise.

Today there appears no need to retain knowledge or to critically examine and evaluate it. Simple bits of information are so readily available for extraction from whatever cloud one chooses to reach in to, all void of context and discernment. The mind is not actively engaged in this passive learning, it is kindred to watching television. This passivity allows the brain the least amount of development. No new neural pathways are laid. The Google syndrome is a serious issue threatening the future of our society. Technology is worthless if the mind is not nurtured and developed. For many today the computer is the master enslaving the student. The opposite should be so, the student mastering the computer as a tool. The amount of information available via the internet is overwhelming. Now, more than ever these thinking skills are vital to becoming a discriminate learner. If action is not taken to remedy the creation of lazy under developed brains we will raise a generation incapable of critical thought. Now that is a tyrants ideal situation and our worst nightmare.

We are creating a generation of young people with the inability to focus and concentrate. In February of this year Umooves, a private firm based in Israel released an application named uHealth that is proven to increase attention and concentration through eye motion tracking. Dr. Herman Weiss, Umooves vice president of Healthcare estimates that up to 50 percent of today's population has focus and attention difficulties. It seems a bit ironic that there will be more apps to download to counteract the effects of so readily using the technology on the very devices that are causing the problem to begin with.

Humanity is being manipulated to relinquish the greatest gift we posses, the only thing that separates us from other species - our ability to think and reason. God risked all by granting us the freedom to reason. Do not sacrifice this, for it is everything.

William K. Sarnak

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