

Podcast 1: Mobile addicts.

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Brandon (Northern accent)

Welcome to English dialogues.

Today I want to start with a question.

For many years the number of teenage suicides went down but in 2013 they started to increase. The question I want all my students listening to this podcast to answer is this: what happened in 2013 that resulted in this increase in suicides?

I will give you a minute to think about it

Well, this week in an American magazine called "The Atlantic" I read the answer. What happened in 2013 is that it was the year when most teenagers started to use mobile telephones with internet. That is the event which psychologists investigating the problem have signalled as the most important.

In today's dialogue, Jack is going to talk with Rokeby Lynch about the effect of mobile phones on individuals, families and society. But first a vocabulary alert. To understand this dialogue you need to know the following unusual words.

Hunchback - Jorobado

Curve - Curvo

Bloody - Maldito

The Dialogue

JACK (SCOTTISH ACCENT) So, Rokeby...what would you like to talk about this week?

ROKEBY (CLASSIC BRITISH ENGLISH) I'd like to talk about fucking mobile phones because we're living in the age of the digital hunchback? Just look around: every man, woman and child in this country is frozen in the same position as they look at their mobile: head down, back curved, one arm out. What happened to Homo Erectus? Our species is supposed to walk vertical...not like a bloody hunchback.

So...you don't like mobiles because you think they're bad for our posture?

I don't like them for many reasons. First of all...they kill conversation because everyone sits around the table in their own little digital world - which is funny because when the internet first arrived they said it would connect us all. Secondly, they also said that the internet was a great tool for education but as our ability to pay attention reduces it's just making us all more stupid. They also said that the internet was great for citizen democracy but now it's become a tool for dictators to publish propaganda.

Sorry?

Look what happened in 2016: Russian spies used Facebook to target American voters with false news against Hillary Clinton. What more evidence do you need that the internet is fucking us up: it gave us Donald Trump. That's why we should all hate Mark Zuckerberg.

But he also bought Instagram...surely there's nothing wrong with that.

Fuck that! Instagram has also mutated...just in a different way. Now the whole concept of photography has gone and it's simply a portal of human vanity that's corrupted photography itself. Do you remember when photography was about memories and friends and places? Now you look at someone's instagram photos and it's all about me. Me on the beach! Me in the car! Me in the restaurant! Me in the mirror! Me with a pair of stupid fucking rabbit ears! Me me me...look at me, everyone!...aren't I fucking wonderful?

Ok...but I'm getting a little confused. I thought we were talking about mobiles...not the internet.

But that's the whole problem, Jack...now they're one and the same...and that's where it went wrong? The internet went from this cool thing you had at home to - with the invention of smartphones - this cool thing you had all the fucking time. Too much stimulation...too much distraction...too much of everything.

Think about porn. Before the internet, the whole experience contained limiting factors: first, you had to leave the house to get it, second - you had to *buy* it because it wasn't free, and third - you had to buy it in public, meaning the neighbours might see you. Then the internet came, and suddenly you had free access to an entire world of porn...*but* at least you had to wait until you got home or could get the computer alone. Even with those limiting factors it was still enough to totally corrupt you...but apparently it wasn't corrupt enough because along came mobile internet and you could now have porn at all those useful moments you always needed it: on the bus, at a funeral, at a job interview...in other words - all the fucking time.

Speak for yourself.

But the scary thing about constant access to the internet, Jack, is that it doesn't have to be something as obvious as porn or games that make our mobiles addictive: simply the act of checking your phone soon becomes an irresistible compulsion. And it's important you understand why?

Why, Rokeby?

It's called dopamine.

Dopamine?

Yes. One of the most important motivators of human behaviour is pleasure, and pleasure is basically a chemical in our brain called dopamine. You have an orgasm - that's dopamine; you get drunk - that's dopamine; you bite into a delicious chocolate cake - that's dopamine; and anything that produces dopamine can be addictive...even if it's just a mini dose.

But...come on...checking your phone doesn't produce dopamine.

That's where you're wrong. Mobile phones are a great example of something that gives us a tiny shot of dopamine. When you check your mobile and you've received a whatsapp from a friend you're attracted to...that gives you a sensation of pleasure i.e. dopamine. When a photo you posted gets 25 likes, that gives you a shot of dopamine. When you receive a job offer by email...that gives you a shot of dopamine. When the most beautiful girl in your class publishes a photo and you can look at her beautiful face...that gives a shot of dopamine.

Now, interestingly, it's exactly this variety of rewards - likes, messages, photos, downloads, tweets or sometimes nothing of interest - that make the mobile so addictive. Everytime you look down to check your mobile it's like throwing the dice or watching the roulette wheel or looking at a present just before you open it... because there are multiple possibilities for what you might find; and here's the incredible part: the not knowing and the anticipation are more of a dopamine rush than the potential reward.

I see.

Incredibly, this type of addiction or compulsion has been known to psychologists since the 1950s when experiments were done with pigeons. They presented a pigeon with a button which, when pecked, would produce food from a tube. When he pecked the button and always received the same amount of food - the pigeon would only peck it when he was hungry. However, if the scientists changed the amount of food and sometimes he got a lot and sometimes a little and sometimes none, the pigeon began pecking the button compulsively...in one case 87,000 times in 14 hours.

This is called the principle of variable rewards and is the foundation of mobile addiction. In the old days...all you could get out of your phone was a text message...so it wasn't addictive...but the moment that the reward became variable...photos, likes, messages, videos etc. the phone suddenly became irresistible.

So, my friend, it seems that when it comes to mobile phones we are no more sophisticated than bloody pigeons and equally vulnerable to the principle of variable rewards.

Fucking hell, Rokeby, so that means that we're not really checking our phones...we're pecking them.

Okay thanks to Jack and Rokeby. Now it's time for a super fast class of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. The following words - las palabras siguientes acaban de salir en el diálogo también salen en nuestro libro de vocabulario. Así que...dime como se dice en inglés. ..

Vocabulary

Pay attention

Too much

At least

Suddenly

Amount

Muy bien. Ahora tienes que traducir 5 frases de nuestro libro de gramática.

Si el libro no hubiera sido tan largo, no me habría aburrido tanto.

No habíamos visto nada parecido.

No construyen pisos baratos en Tokio.

¿Vamos a parar aquí?

¿Has cerrado la puerta correctamente?

Finally, today we heard the word psychologist - psicólogo. I want you to pay attention to the sound psych because it's very different from Spanish and is important in Pronunciation. Repeat after me

Psychologist

Psychiatrist

Psychoanalysis

Psyche

Psycho

