

Are You Believing Lies About Media?

Our constant consumption of television, movies, internet, cell phones, etc., affects us in more ways than we realize.

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh

Two hundred years ago, what sounds could you have heard?

You could have heard things like human voices ... nature sounds ... musical instruments. You could *not* have heard sounds that were electronically produced. No radios, no TVs, no DVD players, no laptops, no iPods, no PS3 or X-Box ...

For the first several thousand years of history, humans were not bombarded with artificial stimuli. Further, they had relatively little information coming at them. All that has changed in this high-tech era when we live with an explosion of information and acute sensory overload.

Technology today provides an amazing array of options that your parents and grandparents could not have imagined when they were teens. It has dramatically changed the way we communicate and relate to other people and has made it possible for us to be endlessly entertained with games, movies, TV programs, music, etc.

Many teenagers today go to bed with their iPods in their ears and wake up with them still there. After a quick shower, they plug them back in for the commute to school. During that commute, they may check their text messages or make a quick call on their cellphones. During the school day, they likely take every opportunity to check those text messages.

At home, they settle in to watch a favorite DVD or spend a few hours of really deep conversation via text messaging or on Facebook:

U Up? U2? WUWH. J2L YK I think I passed my bio exam after all.

gratz. G2GLYS. FFCya

(If you need some help translating, check out the footnote at the end of this article.)

No other generation has had so much technology at their disposal. We don't believe that technology—whether used for social networking or entertainment—is inherently “bad”; it has its benefits. We do believe that using it *mindlessly* is a huge danger zone. We want to make sure that we're controlling it and it's not controlling us.

For our book, [Lies Young Women Believe](#), we interviewed a number of young women, and our conversations with them revealed that this is an area where many are particularly resistant to change. You, too, may be tempted to “tune us out” on this one. We would appeal to you to put all your media on “pause” for a few moments, open your heart, and consider whether you may be believing any lies in relation to your media use. For example, one lie is:

“The benefits of constant media use outweigh the harm”

This was one of the most universally believed lies. Almost every young woman we spoke to (98 percent!) agreed that their media habits negatively affect their relationship with God and others. But they believed the benefits were worth it.

What kind of benefits?

“MySpace connects me to my friends.”

“I usually put on music when I want to quit thinking.”

“I'll see a pretty girl on TV or on YouTube and she'll be dressed a certain way and I know that's what's in style. So it pretty much keeps me in fashion.”

Need we go on? The girls themselves admitted that some of the benefits were pretty shallow and yet they could not seem to change their media habits.

If you think you are immune to behavior changes influenced by your media choices, think again. Horror novelist Stephen King once said, "Movies are the highest popular art of our time, and art has the ability to change lives." We are not immune from buying what they want us to buy, dressing how they want us to dress, and valuing what they want us to value.

If you are taking in regular or significant doses of music, television, the internet, and movies, you are being affected by them. The question is: Are you being influenced positively or negatively? The impact is usually not felt immediately—it's more like an IV in your arm that goes *drip ... drip ... drip* ... gradually pumping a foreign substance into your system. If the substance dripping through that plastic tubing is toxic or poisonous, you may not feel the results right away, but once it gets into your system, your whole body will definitely be affected!

Here's another lie about media:

"It's not a waste of time ... even if it is, it's okay"

A lot of the girls we spoke to estimated that they spend 25-35 hours per week online, text-messaging, and with their iPod in their ears or their brand new iTouch in their hand. We found it interesting that girls who were homeschooled were likely to have the highest number of hours. Many felt that this was absolutely fine. Here were some of their arguments:

"Parents are just not used to it. I hate it when they get mad and they're like 'get off now!' It is how my generation communicates."

"It's how I stay connected to my friends."

"Research proves that you can learn a lot of hand-eye coordination from computer games. "

As far as we know, no great athletic careers have ever been built on the hand-eye coordination learned from computer games, and great relationships are not built solely by instant messaging. We agree that there are some great uses of the media and young generations are comfortable with them. However, everything should have limits.

More and more research is proving that computers have the deadly potential to be addictive. That is—to put you into bondage. Proverbs 25:16 says, "If you find honey, eat just enough" (NIV). Maybe you'd get it better if it said, "If you find chocolate, eat just enough." Have you ever over-eaten to the point of making yourself sick? Too much of even a good thing will make you sick!

We need limits for every area of our lives, including our media habits, or we risk being harmed or getting "sick" in our souls and our relationships. Those boundaries need to be established based on the principles of God's Word and His best for you.

I (Nancy) can easily spend more time with entertainment media than I know is healthy. There are a couple computer games that I really enjoy. There's nothing inherently wrong with them and sometimes they provide a legitimate break from my work. However, I can get carried away with playing these games and end up wasting valuable time, energy, and effort that could be used much more productively. In the process, they (and other media) can subtly steal my heart and hunger for the Lord and His Word and cause me to isolate myself from relationships with others.

Because I know my tendency to get hooked on these things, I've had to establish limits for when and how long I can let myself enjoy things like computer games, television, movies, e-mail, music, and other media. Those limits have proved to be a great blessing—they have helped to guard my heart from spiritual "intruders" and have helped me cultivate greater passion for Christ and sensitivity toward others.

Can you quiet the noise?

Here's one more thing we want you to think about. We've noticed that people who spend most of their waking hours plugged in to media—whether social networking media like MySpace, or entertainment media like iPods and television—have a hard time getting still enough and quiet enough long enough to think or to let God speak to them through His Word.

There is a richness of soul that cannot be cultivated without regular seasons of quiet and solitude. There is a depth in our relationships with God and others that cannot be experienced apart from times of unhurried, face-to-face conversation.

God may not direct you to establish exactly the same boundaries as we have for ourselves. But we want to urge you not to just "go with the flow" when it comes to your media usage. Be intentional about setting limits on what you'll expose yourself to and how much time you'll spend on-line, on your computer, or text-messaging each day or week.

Footnote: Here's the translation for the text message we quoted: "Wish you were here ... Just to let you know ... Congratulations ... Got to go. Love ya so ... Friends forever. See ya." *Adapted with permission from [Lies Young Women Believe](#), by Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh, Moody Publishers, 2008.*