Focus: Emotional Health

Technopenuriaphobia – The Fear Of Losing Technology

It is astonishing: in our fast moving times many people are longing for calmness, relaxation and time without laptop or disturbing phone calls during their holidays and yet it seems to be pretty challenging for most of us to really do without modern technology. Although the longing for returning to simplicity and slower pace is oftentimes huge only few people – even during their holidays – manage to recollect the essential and original. The mobile phone is a constant companion, people send whatsapp messages and sms, they skype, use the navigation system in their car or the portable GPS device and we can access the internet and collect information anytime wherever we are and use various other electronic devices during the day as a matter of course.

During the mid sixties the word *Technophobia* came up describing the fear of the emerging technology. Back then people were much more grounded and bound to nature, because the technology boom had not yet started and developed in the way are facing today. People were rather at the lower end of the so called technology ladder. When you wanted to meet somebody, you stopped by their house and agreed on a date and time or you could – in best case – call the number of a conventional telephone. If the person was not at home there was no other option of reaching them. Life was much slower and at the same time more human, because the personal contact was in focus. The technophobia started especially with the introduction of computers (just imagine, what it would be like today without computers, emails or internet) and grew considerably with the emergence of the World Wide Web (i. e. Internet).

Today things are very much different. The ambition of "having a good life" led over and over again to technological innovations and today includes the use of those innovations as a matter of course. Most of the people living today were born on the current top end of the technology ladder. They have been raised with technology and don't know anything else (just imagine the young generation using Facebook to communicate with friends. This was unimaginable several years ago). We have learned many high-tech skills in order to live - or better said „survive" – in modern towns. If we want to fly somewhere, we book a flight in the internet. When it is too cold, we turn on the heater. When it is too hot, we turn on the air condition. When we are hungry we go to the supermarket or open the fridge. When it gets dark, we turn on the light. When we are on the road, we take our smartphone with us to be constantly reachable and money comes out of a machine. Today's life is not imaginable without technology. The assumed "good life" is based on technology, on comfort, on consumerism and the relief that all this apparently brings. Yet the supposed comfort and security are deceiving and a part of us knows.

Underneath all this technological comfort lies a constantly present, but very subtle and oftentimes unconscious fear. It is the fear of losing technology, which is called *Technopenuriaphobia.* And it really exists. Just look around when you are at the train station, in the subway, in the shopping mall or at a place with many people. 90% are staring at their smartphone and actually miss what is really

happening around them (on the picture below there is e. g. only one man, who is completely unimpressed by Facebook, emails and so on).

It gets very interesting when there is an interference and the reception is suddenly gone (e. g. in a dead spot). Then you see people running around with stretched out arms trying to get a little sign on their mobile that indicates that the reception has been reestablished. We are so much used to technology that it can actually be a shocking experience when technology suddenly breaks down.

I was recently confronted with technopenuriaphobia when my old laptop, which had worked really well until then, suddenly shut down. All apps were closed and I was left with a black screen. Any attempt to restart the laptop failed. At first I was just surprised and rather relaxed thinking „Oh well. I will go to the nearby computer shop on Monday and they will fix it in a second." Said and done. The technopenuriaphobia came up when the friendly employee told me that I had to leave the laptop for 1 or 2 weeks with them, since they had a lot of work to do. This news triggered a certain despair inside of me, which is a mixture of fear and anger, because: My laptop is my office! If I am not delivering trainings, I am working with this thing almost every day. I don't have filing cabinets or paper piles. All data, all contact information (do you still have a paper address book?) were in this technological wonder thing. It was not thinkable to not do anything at all for 2 weeks. What should the customers think if I did not reply to their emails? Besides, I had to send out the August newsletter and write a new article for that and all this before I wanted to go on a summer break for some days. There were astonishingly many reasons why I urgently needed this little technical masterpiece. Through a little negotiation I could reduce the announced 2 weeks to 2 days.

This led to a certain relaxation on my part and I decided to enjoy 2 „laptop-free" days and some – although unplanned – free time. However this didn't last very long, since 2 days later the diagnosis was that the laptop couldn't be fixed but instead died of high age. My office was dead! At least the hard disk could be saved, but some things like old emails or mailing lists were gone. There it was again, the technopenuriaphobia; the fear of losing technology, the fear of losing electronic data. Fortunately I could observe what was happening and asked myself the only important question: „What is life really about? Does my life depend on a laptop and these digital data?" The clear answer was "No!" I kept reflecting and thought about what would happen if I never had a laptop for my work again. It became clear that I could still put myself into service of human beings and the Earth; I could still deliver trainings and just would have to invent a different kind of establishing contact. At that point I was able to relax.

It is scaring how much we are fixed on technology in our daily life without thinking about it. It is so common that electricity comes out of the socket and that we can be reachable anytime anywhere that it doesn't even come to our mind that all this could probably not be available anymore one day. Yet it

is so. More and more structures that were said to be stable are currently breaking apart and technology could sooner or later also be affected (just think about the fact that governments are able to shut down the internet to prevent people from connecting and starting rebellions). Fact is: when modern technology lets us down we are stuck. Modern technology has alienated us from the original, the Earth and even from ourselves. We are brilliant in dealing with high tech stuff, but we have never learned skills to survive on Earth without technology. We have forgotten how we can live without the comfort of high tech on Earth. We have forgotten to use our natural intuition and trust our impulses and instead rely on online information and our logical mind, which eats this information and digests it like a machine.

The focus of most of the people is on fulfilling their own needs, which are oftentimes connected with technology (money comes out of the cash machine; cars only drive with electronic devices; the house or apartment is of course equipped with technology based elements, etc.). But what would actually happen, if technology broke down? Well then the supermarkets would be empty within 2 days and there would be no back-up, because all the logistics and the supply chain are based on electricity, oil and technology. This would be just the start.

We are at the edge of the 2nd Copernican revolution. The first included the insight that the sun does not circle around the Earth but the Earth around the sun. The second Copernican revolution includes the insight that we do not own the Earth (like the past motto "The Earth is OUR planet"), but are instead guests on Earth. Not the human needs are in the center, but the Earth, because one thing is for sure: The Earth will survive, no matter if with human beings or without. It is partly up to us. This does not mean that we should go back to medieval times and live without technology. It is rather about becoming aware of what is happening and remembering the origin and the essential.

Experiment 1: In which ways are you dependent on technology?
Think about when and where in daily life you are dependent on technology and become aware of how much technology runs your life. Here are some examples:

- Your morning wake up service consists of your clock radio or the soft ring tone of your smartphone.
- Your necessary coffee for waking up comes out of the electric coffee or espresso machine.
- Your breakfast comes out of electric fridge.
- The water is pumped with technology into your tap so that you can take a shower or brush your teeth.
- You use your electric tooth brush.
- You use an electric shaver in the morning.
- When it is dark, you naturally turn on the light.
- The first things you check in the morning (and several times during the day) are sms, whatsapp messages, facebook entries or emails, which you can all receive with your smartphone.
- Your car runs on diesel or petrol, which you get of course at the gas station.

- Your car only drives, because of a complicated electronic board computer that allows all parts in the car to „communicate" with each other. If there is a problem with the electronic immobilizer you can't go anywhere.
- When the overhead line system of the train has a problem and you rely on this kind of public transport, you can't go to work.
- You book your travels via internet.
- You buy books and clothes online.
- You don't go anywhere without your smartphone.
- You love your Kindle e-book.
- Now that it is getting colder you naturally turn on the heating.
- You prepare your favorite evening tea with the electric water boiler.
- You cook of course the delicious pasta on the electric stove.
- You panic when you forget your smartphone at home, because you could miss something.
- In the office you – as well as your colleagues – can't do anything without laptop.
- If you can't switch on the television at night and watch the news or your favorite soap you get angry. (How many people use television – and smartphones – to avoid intimacy and feelings?)
- …add your own points.

The good news is that you can heal technopenuriaphobia. It is a stepwise process during which you start with dissolving certain dependencies and acquire again low-tech skills instead of high-tech skills.

Experiment 2: Free yourself partly from dependencies
The second step consists of breaking apart the well-known daily grind and start doing things differently (although part of you might feel resistance). Here are some examples:
- Stop watching TV for the next 4 weeks and realize how the quality of your sleep changes. You will sleep in a deeper and more relaxed way.
- Look at your smart phone at maximum once or twice a day instead of 30 to 100 times. Don't check your smartphone at all before 9 a. m.
- Find a way to save water when brushing your teeth or taking a shower (e. g. by not letting the water run all the time).
- For 4 weeks try to only eat things that can be stored without a fridge, but are still organic.
- Don't use your dishwasher but clean the dishes in a water-saving way by hand.
- Before you turn on the heating to 20 degrees do the experiment of putting on one more layer of clothes.
- Light a candle for a change instead of automatically turning on the light.

These are just some suggestions. It does not mean that it has to be like that or that this is the only right way. There is no right or wrong and it is not about damning technology. This experiment is about breaking through habits and implicitness and to be aware of how your ego might want to resist and rather go back to the usual, technology-dependent daily grind.

Experiment 3: Acquire low-tech skills

Acquiring low-tech skills does not only reconnect you more to earth, but can actually be fun. In any case it is box expanding, meaning that it will go beyond the boundaries of your comfort zone of your ego and give you a new reference point. Here are some examples of low-tech skills

- Collect wood in the forest, carve your own wooden spoon and use it for eating for the next 4 weeks no matter where and what you eat.
- Learn about wild herbs and plants, collect them in nature and make a salad out of the collected plants which you then eat.
- Plant your own vegetables or fruits (this is also possible on a balcony, e. g. by growing salad in a flower-box).
- Spend several days alone in nature without technical devices, far away from civilization.
- Sleep in the forest.
- Learn to make a fire by hand.
- Do an outdoor survival training.
- Connect with a tree (e. g. by leaning against it or hugging it for half an hour).
- Go into the forest and collect wild raspberries, strawberries and blackberries. Eat them right away from the bush.
- Make your own bow out of wood.
- Help at an alpine cabin, milk cows, learn to make cheese and butter.
- Help to make hay.
- Plant trees.
- Learn to make your own toothpaste and soap.
- Try plants you don't know. Smell and taste the plants. When you take them into your mouth, trust your natural impulse to either chew and swallow them or to spit them out.
- Observe animals in nature for several hours (not in the zoo). These can also be small animals (ants, bugs, birds, squirrels…)
- Over and over again lay down flat on the earth and feel the life below you. By and by let yourself be touched by the pain of the earth that humans have caused her due to the consumerism thinking.

These are just some small examples you can try. You may also add your own experiments.

One important part of healing technopenuriaphobia consists of owning your feelings again. Human beings mainly live as planets. The characteristics of planets are that they take more energy than they give, they consume, copy, imitate, use, absorb. In modern society we have been trained to live as planets although we are designed to sparkle as stars. In contrast to planets, stars give more energy than they take. When we live as stars then the focus is on creating, experimenting, exploring, appreciating, declaring, discovering, generating. As stars we are inspired and have a talent to give. However, in order to be able to live as stars, it is crucial that we own our feelings again, which are our inner navigation system and lead us unerringly through life. Having access to the four big feelings territories of anger, fear, sadness and joy ignites archetypal powers in us that we need in order to be authentically human, live responsibly in accordance with mother Earth and be our destiny in action.

Owning your feelings again is an initiation process allowing you in the end that you lead a life in service of your so called bright principles. Then the term "good life" suddenly gets a completely new meaning, which is the one of "meaningful and fulfillment". Are you ready?

Best wishes,
Nicola Neumann-Mangoldt

Book recommendation: „Directing the power of conscious feelings" from Clinton Callahan, which also deals with technopenuriaphobia and the necessity of owning your feelings.