Totally (Un)Wired

24 hours: Cold E-Turkey

The Assignment

Now that you have put together a comprehensive profile of your media activities on a typical day, you are going to abstain from those activities for 24 hours.

Choose a weekday where you will abstain from all engagement with media activities for 24 hours. Completely.

Like the Totally Wired Media Log this is an auto-ethnographic study and you will be collecting data about your experience. Carry a notebook/journal and pen or a dictaphone around and write down/speak how you are feeling, and what you are doing during the day on at least an hour-by-hour basis. I want to hear about your frustrations, interesting experiences and funny moments. **Be observant**—watch what other people are doing and how they are behaving in their tech-world. Be especially sensitive to how they treat you. This project is far more enjoyable if you have a friend who is willing to participate in this experiment with you—I want to see how you are coping, how other people are coping with you, and how you see other people behaving.

It is essential that you journal your day thoroughly.

Exceptions to the rule:

Books (real books with paper pages)—this is your one luxury. No one should ever be deprived of reading real books—you are a student after all and this will provide an excellent opportunity for you to learn how to check out a **real book from the real library!** Also you are exempt under the following conditions:

- If you have to engage with electronic media at work (we do not want anyone to get fired over this project).
- If you need to work on a major assignment where you have to use the computer.
- If you must, you can take calls from parents. (If you need to call friends, have a friend with you who can make the call.)

Context:

The harsh reality of this assignment means that **NO**, you **MAY NOT** use your smart phone or iPod during the day. **NO** you **MAY NOT** Facebook or browse on the computer or, horror of horrors—play video games. **NO** you **MAY NOT** watch movies or read magazines. And, if you are out and about say at a restaurant where there are TV screens (Buffalo Wild Wings), you will have to turn your back, close your eyes and block your ears, however, I must warn you that it is difficult to eat and drink under these conditions (I have checked it out—just to be safe.)

Trying to avoid all these temptations is going to be frustrating, complicated and hopefully hilarious as you try to figure out alternative ways to organize and get through your day. Dealing with friends and family is going to be interesting—they will probably be annoyed with you because this exercise is going to impact them as much as you, so pay attention to their reactions. Annoying people can be a lot of fun. You have license to annoy (for 24 hours).

Planning ahead for this project is a really good idea. Planning to stay in bed all day with a hangover, faked illness—mental or physical—or other "in bed" activities are unacceptable.

So—what can you do? Well, you can treat this project in two ways. You can act like a petulant six year old and spend the day alone in a foul mood, bored, lonely and totally disconnected from the world. You can cheat by trying to spend the whole 24-hour period sleeping. **Or, you can treat it as a new adventure**. Gosh, you can talk to people face-to-face; listen to the world around you now that you don't have ear-buds in. You can make your own music—sing out loud in public. You can read that real book from the real library. You could go visit someone you haven't seen for a while, go for a hike in the snow, go bowling, ice skating, go see a play or live band (ooh that's novel). Get a group of you together and play scrabble/monopoly, cook a meal together or bake cookies.

You will have plenty of time to think, so think really carefully about what this project is doing to you. You can be a silent observer and watch how other people are behaving with their media gadgets. Pick up on an old hobby that you haven't had time for. Dust off your guitar, bagpipes or mouthorgan and go out busking for money to pay off student loans. Believe it or not, life is possible and potentially fun beyond E-gadgets.

Let me stress this again—you will have much more fun if you plan the experiment with a friend.

Fill up your journal/notebook/dictaphone with lots of details about your day using these questions as a guide:

How are you spending your time?
What effect is this having on your daily routine?
How are you managing to meet up with friends?
How are you coping without music, texting, Facebook?
How are you doing with your homework?
How are your friends reacting? Are you missing out on anything yet? Do you feel out of synch? Bored? Frustrated?
What creative strategies are you coming up with to keep yourself amused?
Are you having fun yet? Have you cleaned your room? Cooked an edible meal? Done your homework? Started that real book from the real library?
Have you caved in yet? Cheated? How, when?
You are going to have plenty of time for making entries in your journal—please be thorough.