Have you ever gotten into a dispute online that left you in fiery anger? Do you continually take your phone just to check for notifications, instants after you already checked? Do you feel the desire to check your phone right now?

Instant-communication technology controls our modern life and it appears to be created just to bother us. This is because news channels, social-media companies, and advertisers are aware that the best effective method to keep us clicking, sharing and consuming is to keep us attached and nervous. From climate change to unreal news to thigh gaps, it appears that there's never been more to be concerned about.

Due to that, stress, depression, anxiety, eating disorders as well as other mental illnesses have been increasing worldwide. Is it possible to be in a world of instant communication and 24-hour news cycles without going crazy? How can we remain happy and healthy in this messy digital landscape? You'll find the answers to these questions as well as others, in these chapters.

The world is faster and chaotic than ever, and this is getting us sick.

The modern world is a good place to live in. There is less severe poverty, hunger and violence than ever, and life expectancy is increasing. However, despite the fact that people live longer, more prosperous lives, they are also a lot more likely to be stressed, anxious and depressed. In industrialized countries all over the globe, mental illness is increasing.

Maybe one of the causes of this is all the environmental, political and cultural changes we are facing at the moment. Change makes people anxious. Just consider the ice caps melting, robots taking over our jobs or fake news stealing elections, and the world can begin to look like a very scary place.

Of all these changes, none is happening as quickly as technological change. The processing power of computers doubles every few years according to Moore's Law. During the 1960s, when the first observation was made, a simple mathematical computer was as big as the size of a car. Nowadays you can take the entire internet around in your pocket.

This fast technological development may be at the bottom of a lot of other changes, influencing everything from political elections to our body image. For instance, social media has rapidly become a big part of our lives, with the main impacts on how we associate with each other. Think about it – just only some years ago, no one was aware of what a selfie or a tweet was. Now we are continuously packaging, presenting and scoring ourselves on social media platforms.

However, while technology is renovated every few months, humans haven't evolved in thousands of years. Regardless of the number of blue screens that light up our homes at night, we still work on the same internal clock just like our ancestors did. We still need a healthy quantity of sunlight, sleep, and real-life social interaction.

Therefore, when we're holed up inside for 14-hour workdays, emails make us stay up at night and social media substitutes human interaction, we deny our bodies and minds of normal human needs. As the author, you possibly know from experience that a lot of technology, and social media, in specific, can worsen the feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.

It's time we observe how our modern life overlaps with mental health and we need to look for means to protect ourselves from the negative impacts of ever-faster technological change.

To remain stable in a messy world, we have to remove the overwhelming choice that comes with modern life.

In the sixteenth-century in England, if you had a book club, probabilities are you would ultimately run out of things to read. The British Library during that time published only 40 books yearly. On the contrary, in 2016 the number of books available was about 134,021,533. It can be depressing to know that regardless of how much of a bookworm you are, you will only ever read a part of all the titles in circulation.

Such an excess of choice is existing in nearly all aspects of modern life. From books to face creams to cereal brands, there is simply a lot to choose from. Also, there's a lot of information. With the internet, we have access to a vast amount of data on everything such as recipes,

personal opinions, and historical occurrences. This blend of excess and access leaves us with messy lives and messy brains. We are completely overstimulated, however, we regularly feel like we're missing out. It is no surprise that we often feel overwhelmed, anxious and depressed.

Therefore, what can we do to address the overload of modern life?

As a person, you can't lessen the abundance of the world. However, you can control how much you take in. You can transform the world by adjusting your experience of it. Likewise, you can't stop the development of technology, however, you can learn how to make use of it sensibly and in a manner that aids your mental well-being.

One main instrument in nurturing calmness is to take things away. Don't try to continue with the countless stream of news, posts, and products, and stop bothering about what you might miss. Rather, select a few vital tasks to concentrate on and endeavor to limit all other distractions, particularly the digital ones.

The author uses this method when he's stressed and overwhelmed. When he experiences a bit of anxiety, he disconnects entirely. He stops listening to the news, social media, TV even magazines for some days and he concentrates on taking care of himself rather than looking for distractions.

Such changes aren't a miracle result. However, once you cut the excess of information that is part and piece of the modern world, you will see that your body and mind will start to calm down.

Don't be scared to disconnect – you won't miss what you miss.

Ever since we began to put the internet in our pocket, it has taken charge of our lives. More than half of the people in the world are now connected. Not only are there more people online, but we're also spending more and more time online.

In some ways, the spread of the internet is a good thing. We have access to a lot of information, we link with like-minded people and we can stream live what is happening on the other part of

the world. However, this hyper-connectedness has its cons too. What is the number of people that persuade themselves that they have a lethal illness by googling their symptoms? Or ruined their mood by looking at an ex-partners Instagram profile? How many times have we been haunted by the continuous coverage of a mass shooting?

With all the world's news very easy to access, we have more fuel for our concern than ever. Worse, news channels and social media platforms are aware that those bad feelings are exactly what makes us continue scrolling and checking. So they shock, catastrophize and concentrate on the bad things, much as someone going through depression or anxiety does.

No one understands yet how these new technologies affect our mental health. However, it is obvious that things are terrible when people in the industry start to publicly worry about their products. In 2018, Tim Cook the Apple CEO himself warned people against the misuse of technology. A New York Times report indicated that a lot of Apple and Yahoo employees send their children to tech-free schools.

How can we remain human in a digital world that sees us as data? Firstly, we have to understand that the digital world is only digital. Individuals are not their Twitter bios or their Instagram posts. The bulk of worse headlines doesn't signify that there's no good news, and a platform can't substitute real-world friendships.

Secondly, cultivate abstinence. This is definitely more difficult than it sounds. However, we don't have to be perfect. Would it truly be so bad if we only looked at our notifications just five times a day? Endeavor to keep your phone out of sight for like one or two hours at a time. Check the news no more than twice a day. Unfollow people that only irritate you. Once we leave the internet, it's surprising how little we miss it.

Work less, take time for yourself alone and get adequate sleep.

Time –particularly the feeling of not having enough of it – is one of the main stressors of modern life. With life-expectancy doubling up over the last century, and with time-saving technology at

our fingertips, we must have more of it than ever. The issue is that we also have more of other things. Particularly, we have more work.

Work is good when it gives us drive. However, when it is full of regular pressure to do more and be better, it destroys our mental as well as physical health. The modern work culture of regular assessment and ever-higher aspirations, together with extensive work-place bullying and sexism, is harmful. Work stress can be harmful in the form of stroke, heart attack, and higher suicide risk.

Also working a lot signifies working worse. In a study that was conducted in a hospital in Sweden on reducing nurses' shifts from 8 to 6 hours, they saw that nurses with shorter shifts were measurably healthier, happier and more productive.

Luckily, it is possible to work less. The key point is not to get more done, however, to have less to do. Once you recognize that your work is (most likely) not a situation of life and death – and your inbox will never be empty – you'll experience less pressure. It's normal to go slower, even if it means taking a few days to respond to an email or missing an occasional deadline.

Also, working less signifies sleeping more. A lack of sleep has a severe negative effect on our mental and physical health. It damages our cognitive function and it increases the risk of stroke, heart disease, and diabetes. The World Health Organization suggests seven to nine hours of sleep a night, but a lot of us get much less.

There are a lot of simple methods to sleep longer and better. Developing a nighttime habit, avoiding alcohol as well as caffeine and putting away devices before bed is all proven to improve sleep. The most effective method is also the simplest – sleep a little earlier. This may look like a no-brainer, however, the later people sleep, the less sleep they get, even if they don't have to wake up in the morning. Therefore, don't be scared to put away your laptop a little earlier in the evenings – those emails can wait.

Remember that no one bothers about how you look except you.

If the number of beauty products, healthy foodstuffs, and personal trainers is any sign of how good-looking a society is, we've not for once looked better. There are a lot of products and services that are meant to make us look younger, beautiful and skinnier. However, we feel worse about how we look than ever. In Japan, 38% of the population report being very unhappy with their looks. In the past decade in the United Kingdom, health issues and hospitalizations as a result of eating disorders have nearly doubled.

Why are we really bothered about how we look? A major part of the issue is overexposure to unrealistic beauty criteria on social media. A lot of beautiful people's pictures are shown to us than ever before. Apps and filters make the division between what we think we should look like and what we really look like even greater.

Also, companies make profits from rising beauty standards. They are aware that we will spend a lot on their product if it assures us to solve a particular issue, which is why they draw our attention to ever-new issues.

Concerns about how we look are also related to our fear of getting old. Remarkably, the people who bother least about aging are older people. 66% of the people over the age of 70 say they feel positive about aging. Maybe as they grow older and wiser, they come to an understanding that worrying about age and look doesn't affect or change your age or appearance. It only makes you feel a lot worse.

There's just one proven method to feel good about your body, face or age, and that method is to embrace them how they are. Fortunately, changing your character is much easier than changing your appearance. If you have a problem letting go of unrealistic beauty criterions, think of the people you love and the way you feel when you see them. Are you bothered about their bent teeth, big noses or bellies? Definitely not, because you love them! Therefore, be kinder to yourself, and accept your imperfections the same way you accept the imperfections of your loved ones.

And one more thing– the beach isn't concerned about your body, either. It's just a beach.

The first stage towards changing your behavior is awareness

Are you aware of the time you spend on social media daily? If you are not aware, that time is unlikely to decrease. The first step toward changing your behavior for good is by being conscious of what you do and how it makes you feel.

For instance, imagine that there it is possible to measure stress. Let's name this unit of measurement a psychogram. All the stressful events in your day weigh different amounts of psychograms. When you receive a call from your bank, it is 70 psychograms. A complete email inbox is 250 psychograms. The psychograms for each activity vary depending on your behavior and also the total number of psychograms you can withstand in a day. In contrast, minus psychograms weigh the things that calm and lighten the stress, like yoga or walking the dog.

If you weighed your life like that, you would immediately become conscious of the impact these stressful things have on your mental state. For instance, If you knew precisely why you were feeling anxious, maybe you would avoid falling into a brutal spiral of feeling bad about feeling bad. Also, you will start to change some of your behavior, maybe highlighting the things that make you feel better and reducing what weighs you down.

Mental illness sucks, however, it can be a good teacher in differentiating the two. What's good for you when you're sick is mostly good for you when you're healthy. Things like rest, light exercise and fresh air are good for everybody. A study that was conducted in 2013 revealed that 90% of people felt an improvement in self-esteem after walking in the forest. In contrast, the things that make you feel worse are alcohol, cigarettes and work stress –it even damages you in good times. If you continue checking in with yourself, you'll learn to know what works for you.

Therefore, rather than trying to change your life on the spot, begin by simply being more aware of your surroundings, your behaviors and how they make you feel. Accept your feelings, embrace the things you can't change and concentrate on the positive things you can do more of.

Rather than continuously wanting more, try to be happy with what you have.

Here's a huge secret of consumerism – happiness is bad for business. A customer who is satisfied with what she has already isn't a customer at all. This the reason why advertising is completely about making us feel that we lack something that can be gotten by buying a product.

Contemporary marketing experts even have an abbreviation for the mental state of the ideal consumer which is FUD meaning "fear, uncertainty, doubt."

To promote FUD in their customers, companies make us rely on their products to make us prettier, fitter and smarter before we can be happy. Happiness is regularly found in the future, immediately after the next purchase. What these companies won't say is that the only means to be happy is to be happy at the moment. Happiness is about being okay with who we are and what we already have. Therefore, don't trust the advertisements. We're good as we are, and we have abundantly.

It is possible to shop less and in general want less. Certainly, it is not a crime to want something. However, you should know that wanting always shows lack – a lack of the thing you want. Consider it as a tiny hole in the heart. If you poke a lot of holes or let one get too big, happiness will begin to leak out. Hence, the point isn't to remove wants, but to reduce them.

Another significant means to nurture happiness is to avoid comparing yourself with others, particularly with someone else's social-media highlight reel. Don't compare a present self with an imaginary future self, either.

This includes accepting failure. The world is messy, and we can be messy, too. The author himself fails a few times to heed to the advice he offers in this book. We, humans, are imperfect creatures. However, at the same time, each one of us is perfect in their humanity.

As a society, we have to improve at addressing mental health problems.

We've looked at what you can do as a person to protect yourself from the stresses of modern life. Let's now look at what we as a society can do together to make the world a less stressful place for everyone. How can we improve the association between our culture and our mental health?

On an individual level, the first phase toward change is to become conscious of the issue. Nowadays, a lot of people are now openly talking about their mental health difficulties. However, mental illness is still stigmatized. When we talk about a celebrity "admitting" to anxiety or call someone "brave" for talking about their depression, we spread the notion that mental illness is something that should remain a secret. This setting of fear and shame can hinder people from getting the actual care they need.

Furthermore, mental health issues are regularly not taken seriously enough until they have developed. For instance, stress is talked down or hyped as part of our ambitious work culture. We have to develop a world where it's easier to talk about our feelings and how they are affected by the modern world.

This involves identifying the close association between mental and physical health. The separation we form between our bodies and minds goes back to René Descartes a French philosopher. In 1640, Descartes wrote an essay signifying that the body is like a machine, completely different from the mind.

This notion has influenced Western culture as well as our health-care system. However, increasingly, it's obvious that this isn't true. The mind is closely connected to the body, and the body is more than just a machine. For instance, scientists have found a network of 100 million nerve cells in our gut, called the "little brain" and it is that one that controls our feelings and decision-making.

Once we've opened our eyes to the connection between body, mind, and society, we can form a future where technology is used to support humanity. We can create rules and regulations that

guide our usage and hinder overuse. We can create more non-commercial spaces that enable humans to be humans, instead of consumers, like parks, museums, and libraries. Also, we can form a culture where it's normal to work less, buy less and be more human.

Notes on a Nervous Planet by Matt Haig Book Review

Our modern way of life, and new technologies, specifically adds to stress, anxiety, and depression. For us to remain happy and healthy, we have to remove some of the overloads of modern life. Once we understand that the time we spend scrolling, working and bothering, we can learn to change our focus and practice calmness to help us through difficult times.

Switch off your notifications.

All of them entirely. Now. Go to the "Settings" app on your device and stop any banners, pings, and badges from new messages. Once you understand that the outside world doesn't stop revolving when you miss an email, it becomes easier to give your inner world a break.

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