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How to Live a Fulfilling Life In a Time of Technology

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May 3rd 2017

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Introduction

We live in a time and society where multitasking is expected. We are encouraged to eat while we work; check our emails at any given time, including when we are with our families and friends and the work day has ended; and generally be available to switch our attention and energy at any given time. Our consistent technological advancements perpetuate and intensify this culture. The emergence of smartphones, and thus the emergence of essentially having a small computer in your pocket, has fuelled a feeling of obligation that we now all have of being available to others at all times. This has also allowed us to be easily trained into an addiction to distraction. While at first these advancements in technology, which work to “make us more connected,” were exciting, they now prove to be creating cracks in our overall well-being. Most people would agree that they care about their well-being, so understanding what this should be understood as and why certain technological advancements are detrimental to it is important.

Most people seem to be concerned with living a good life. The idea of “the Good Life” is highly debatable. Some see the Good Life as one that comes from the life circumstances you were born into (such as wealth, good social standing, etc.) and, thus, from mere luck. Others equate the Good Life with the happy life. The Good Life is also often associated with the idea of well-being, and that to live well and do well is to achieve the Good Life. Throughout this paper, when I say the Good Life, I will be assuming that the Good Life is consistently experiencing well-being, and therefore flourishing. I will be focusing on two competing views of well-being. One is hedonism, and the other is eudaimonism. I will explain both views, ultimately defending eudaimonism and explaining why hedonism is false. I will be defending an idea of well-being that relies on eudaimonic beliefs, including that well-being comes from living well and doing well; and a psychological view of what we need in order to function well, and therefore live well.

These psychological needs are autonomy, relatedness, and competence. I will be connecting various lines of reasoning on the Good Life when I then assume that if we are able to live well, we will live a fulfilling life.

After I defend eudaimonic well-being, I will explain why a mental state of mindfulness should be viewed as an important component of maintaining eudaimonia and, hence, of well-being. I will be examining various studies on mindfulness meditation practices and mindfulness trainings. The outcomes of these will show various cognitive and psychological benefits that arise from practicing obtaining this state of mind. While these studies conclude merely with reasons for why mindfulness is beneficial, I will make the claim that if this mental state was never obtained, we would be unable to satisfy our innate psychological needs and, hence, thwart our ability to live well.

This recurring question of “How does one live well?” and our ever-changing technological culture are deeply tied together. After I defend the idea of well-being that I will be relying on, and why mindfulness should be included as an important component of this equation, I will explain how our culture’s reliance on screens and online connections can prove to be problematic when it comes to maintaining our well-being. Our psychological needs prove to not flourish under the environment that smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc., often provide. My core concern is with the design behind these devices and the increase in social media presence. Specifically, I am concerned with their excessive influence over our ability to be mindful, and to have positive relationships with those around us; and how this relationship with technology is making our lives worse overall.

I will be arguing that in order to live well, we need to flourish. In order to flourish, we need to satisfy our innate psychological needs. Our well-being is dependent upon satisfying our

innate psychological needs, and in attempting to satisfy these needs we need to be able to achieve true states of mindfulness. Addiction to distraction, and excessive involvement in social media, becomes detrimental to our well-being, by deteriorating our ability to be mindful, and disconnecting us from the positive social interactions we need in order to thrive. If we are unable to be mindful we will fail to satisfy our need for competence, as well as autonomy; if we cannot connect face-to-face we will not satisfy our need for relatedness. These forms of technology therefore threaten to make our well-being impossible to achieve.

I. Hedonism

If Suzie feels good, is healthy (physically and mentally), and has a general sense of being content with the current state of her life, one might say that Suzie's well-being is intact. However, if Suzie began dating Craig, and Craig turned out to be incredibly controlling, manipulative, and in other ways emotionally abusive, then Suzie's friends might worry about her being in this relationship. In particular, they might say they are concerned for her well-being. But what specifically are they referring to when they speak of Suzie's "well-being?"

There are two competing views of well-being that I will examine: the hedonic view and the eudaimonic view. Hedonism and eudaimonism are theories of how to live well, and living well is generally understood as living "the Good Life" (when one lives well, one achieves well-being; when one secures well-being via living well, one is living the Good Life). I will be relying on Fred Feldman's outline of hedonism, and a couple of its variations, in this chapter. In Pleasure and the Good Life, he presents five different interpretations of the Good Life and the fifth of those is the interpretation that most hedonistic and eudaimonic theories rely on, which is that the Good Life is the life that is good for the individual herself as opposed to a life that is good for other people or a life that is morally good (2004). Feldman's interpretation of the Good Life is

also what some philosophers take to be “well-being,” a view that I take as well. As such, this interpretation can be understood as the Good Life is the one that experiences exceptional well-being. This chapter lays out hedonism, and why it is ultimately false.

Hedonism is a theory of well-being that focuses on pleasure. Feldman states that the core view of hedonism is that the pleasant life is the Good Life: a life is good to some degree if and only if pleasant. A life is *better* the more pleasant it is overall. To illustrate, imagine that Jane has a life filled with an average degree of pleasantness. She has a nice home; makes a lot of money; has a kind and supportive partner; and has all of her basic needs met. Her life is a pretty pleasant life, and therefore, according to hedonism, a good life. Now imagine Adam: a successful store owner, who is loved by everyone he meets; has a great partner who is also successful and supportive; and has the best luck in the world allowing for nothing to go wrong for him, ever. His life is even more pleasant than Jane’s, and is therefore a better life, if hedonism is true.

Default Hedonism

There are many different interpretations of the pleasant life being the Good Life, but to simplify things, Feldman constructs “default hedonism” (DH). This is the basic structure of hedonism that Feldman finds most theorists of hedonism are reflecting back to, or criticizing. To understand default hedonism, Feldman first clarifies an understanding of pleasure and pain, where pleasure is measured by hedons, and pain is measured by dolors. One essentially strives for a balance of hedons and dolors, where hedons outnumber the dolors one is accumulating. Everyone experiences episodes of pleasure and pain throughout their lives, and the idea is to theoretically measure the amount of pain vs. pleasure one has experienced by looking at the magnitudes of the episodes experienced, and which were most frequent (those of pain or those of pleasure).

For example, when Stacy wakes up in the morning and has time to drink her coffee, eat a balanced and nutritious breakfast, and makes it to work without any traffic issues, her day has begun very pleasantly. One may say her experience would be worth about 5 hedons, and 0 dolors (this being a purely made up scale). If her day continued in this excellent manner, and she made a few big sales, had pleasant interactions with the customers she spoke with, and was complimented by her boss, Stacy would be feeling great and this continued pleasantness would increase the number of hedons she has. If something negative happened at some point during this day (perhaps she hit a lot of traffic on the way home from work), making her feel negatively, a dolor or two would find its way into the measurement of her well-being that day. If the traffic were the *only* negative experience, this would still leave her with an overall good day, where the number of hedons she had was 8, and the number of dolors 2. However, if she merely had a smooth morning, an okay day at work where she made one sale and lost another, hit mild traffic on the way home, but then found out that her eldest child was suspended from school for a week for throwing an orange at another kid maliciously, Stacy's negative experiences may outweigh the pleasant experiences, and her hedon-dolor ratio may look more like 5-9. Stacy's life in the latter example is therefore worse than in the former, according to hedonism. Now that the pleasure & pain component of hedonism has been explained, we can turn to discussing default hedonism, as explained by Feldman. Feldman defines default hedonism as follows:

Default Hedonism

1) Every episode of pleasure is intrinsically good; every episode of pain is intrinsically bad.

2) The intrinsic value of an episode of pleasure is equal to the number of hedons of

pleasure contained in that episode; the intrinsic value of an episode of pain is equal to the number of dolors of pain contained in that episode.

3) The intrinsic value of a life is entirely determined by the intrinsic values of the episodes of pleasure and pain contained in that life, in such a way that one life is intrinsically better than another if and only if the net amount of pleasure in the one is greater than the net amount of pleasure in the other. (2004, p.27).

He expands on what each of these components means, and says that the first component touches on “universalistic hedonism,” which means that every episode of pleasure is itself *good* (2004, p.27). Likewise, every episode of pain is itself *bad*. These are experiences that are good or bad for the person experiencing them, not simply objectively good or bad. Also, no good or bad experience is unworthy or wrong. If Jim gets hit by a car and becomes hospitalized for five months, and he experiences a great deal of pain, this experience is intrinsically bad for him. However, if he one day receives an ice cream cone and it fills him with happiness and comfort, this is a pleasant feeling, and is itself a good experience. That pleasant experience could also be sharpening pencils. If Jim finds the experience of sharpening pencils to be pleasant, then this is a good experience. His life is at least a little bit good, because he has had these pleasant experiences.

The second component assigns measurable value to these episodes. If the pleasure is very intense or big, then the intrinsic value of this pleasure is greater than that of a pleasure that is less intense or smaller. The duration of the episode gets factored in as well, where longer is better for pleasure. For pain, the bigger the pain, and the longer it lasts, the worse the experience is, and the more negatively it contributes to the intrinsic value of one’s experience. Since Jim was greatly injured, and the episode of pain (five months) lasted longer than any temporary pleasant episode

within that five-month frame did, then the intrinsic value of Jim's life has decreased. However, if Jim led a generally pleasant life before this, and a very pleasant life after this, then overall the hedons would outnumber the dolors and his life would have a positive intrinsic value.

The third component asserts that only the intrinsic value of a pleasurable or painful experience constitutes the intrinsic value of a person's life. What a person knows, how virtuous one is, or what one's preferences are, are not factors that go into measuring the intrinsic value of a person's life. If Jim goes on to create a wonderful awareness program for drinking and driving (let's say he was hit by a drunk driver), and finds great success in this, it is not contributing in any way to the overall intrinsic value of his life unless there are strong, present, episodes of pleasure accompanying this venture. If Jim feels a great deal of pleasure when he gets up and speaks to roomfuls of people, then this program is contributing positively to the overall intrinsic value of his life. If Susan has the same career as Jim, and experiences the same amount of pleasure as him, then her life is equally as good. However, if the pleasure that comes from speaking to others is the only source of pleasure in Jim's life, but Susan also experiences episodes of pleasure from hanging out with her kids, partner, and her spin classes, then Susan's life is intrinsically better than Jim's. This is because the net amount of pleasure in Susan's life is greater than that of Jim's.

Two important things to note about DH, Feldman says, are that it does not assume or require anything about *happiness*, and that it does not say that pleasant *things* are intrinsically good. To expand on that first note, DH does not involve views on happiness, despite the fact that when describing pleasant experiences, one may say many of the same things about happiness. The two may overlap and even appear the same at times, but happiness can be found in a myriad

of ways, and for some happiness is something that exists without explicitly experiencing something pleasant.

On the second note, it is important to distinguish between a pleasant experience and pleasant things. A pleasant episode is one in which a person personally experiences pleasant feelings. There are many things that are pleasant, such as warm fireplaces, cozy beds, puppies, or a hot meal. The fact that these things are pleasant things that exist does not equate to them being essentially good to an individual. According to hedonism, what is intrinsically good is the feeling one gets from the warm fireplace and not the fireplace itself. If we go back, then, and examine the assessment of Jane, Adam, and Stacy's life based on their pleasant experiences, we must note that those pleasant experiences need to have been accompanied by sensory, pleasant feelings in order for them to have contributed to the intrinsic value of their lives.

Attitudinal Hedonism

Feldman himself ends up finding that hedonism as explained above is too limiting. He recognizes that hedonism cannot escape the many objections it faces if it is defined as only allowing sensory pleasures, or pleasures relating to the distinct feeling of pleasure, to constitute a pleasant life. He therefore ends up presenting another variation of hedonism: attitudinal hedonism. While a sensory pleasure is one where a person *feels* pleasurable *sensations*, attitudinal pleasures do not require "feelings" in the same sense. If a person "enjoys it, is pleased about it, is glad that it is happening, is delighted by it" then he is experiencing attitudinal pleasure (2004, p. 56). With attitudinal hedonism, one may be experiencing sensory pleasure, but it won't contribute to the overall intrinsic value of one's life unless it is also accompanied by a pleasant attitude about the experience. Feldman refers to this as intrinsic attitudinal hedonism (IAH), and it is formulated as follows:

Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism

1) Every episode of intrinsic attitudinal hedonism is intrinsically good; every episode of intrinsic attitudinal pain is intrinsically bad.

2) The intrinsic value of an episode of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure is equal to the amount of pleasure contained in that episode; the intrinsic value of an episode of intrinsic attitudinal pain is equal to the amount of pain contained in that episode.

3) The intrinsic value of a life is entirely determined by the intrinsic values of the episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure and pain contained in the life, in such a way that one life is intrinsically better than another if and only if the net amount of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure in the one is greater than the net amount of that sort of pleasure in the other. (2004, p.66).

This means that experiences of sensory pleasure, on their own, will not contribute to the intrinsic value of one's life. For example, if I am eating a piece of cake and experiencing sensory pleasure, that will not contribute to the overall intrinsic value of my life unless I experience attitudinal pleasure about eating it (e.g. I am glad that it is happening). To understand this better, think of "attitude" as one's inner-self personally endorsing the experience. One may also experience attitudinal pleasure without experiencing sensory pleasure, which is important to note. This last point is demonstrated in the following example.

Imagine a scientist who recently discovered the cure to "allergic to life" disease - an epidemic that makes being around other people, having a list of responsibilities, and needing to be an otherwise self-sufficient and fully functioning adult, an annoying and never ending reason to complain. Now all of the people who suffered from hating other people, and the many tasks of living as a functioning adult, are carefree individuals who enjoy socializing with the other idiots

of the world, and find the day-to-day tasks of getting ready for work, going to work, being asked to do a lot of things, and then doing more work, absolutely thrilling. The process of finding this cure was not an easy one - in fact it involved many sleepless nights, and many painful social experiments. One would therefore say that this process for the scientist was devoid of sensory pleasure, and the pleasantness of being thanked for the cure is only temporary. With attitudinal pleasure being the focus, the scientist might think to herself: "I have accomplished such a great thing, I feel great about this," without feeling any physical endorphin rush or any other sense of sensory pleasure. If DH were true, then the scientist's life would not be going well because she was not experiencing those physical, sensory, experiences of pleasure. But her life is going well, so DH is false. IAH can explain why her life is going well. It is going well because she has a positive mental opinion of her experience. She is experiencing pleasure in regard to her attitudes towards her work, and therefore living a good life.

Why Hedonism is False

At first glance hedonism seems compelling, particularly attitudinal hedonism. The idea of a good life is one that should be achievable for all, and hedonism seems to provide a straightforward, achievable theory of the Good Life. Under hedonism (or at least attitudinal hedonism), a person needs to engage in activities and experiences that he or she personally endorses and therefore has a pleasant attitude about. This is something that anyone has the ability to do; it is not a theory that involves components out of reach for anyone, such as being born into a specific socio-economic status, being from a certain place, having more advantages than others, or having a life free from as much physical/sensory pain as possible (which is nearly impossible). The life of the sage, the life of the saint, or the life of the *crook* could equally be as good so long as the persons have equally pleasant attitudes towards the style of life he or she is living.

However, the hedonistic account of what the Good Life consists of has detrimental limitations, ultimately making it false.

Hedonism proves to be false because there are components of the Good Life that this theory fails to include. There is more to the Good Life than simply feeling or thinking that it is pleasant. As humans, we have to strive for health, emotionally and physically, in order to function our best and to thrive. Let's compare the lives of two people who both have the same amount of pleasure. One of these people, though, also has a high level of emotional and physical health. The physically and emotionally healthy person is able to do more, is able to create healthier relationships, succeeds in her career field, and experiences less anxiety and depression. This person is thriving, comparatively. There are specific components of the Good Life that we can see hedonism would not require, which would be problematic. For example, a Good Life would include autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Let's return to the two people leading lives with an equal amount of pleasure. We can refer to them as H and E. H is not autonomous, while E is. H experiences a lot of pleasure, because he lives in a lab where someone controls him and gives him the notion of thinking that his life is pleasant. Is that really a good life? E, on the other hand, is in complete control of his life, and has chosen a career path based on his skills and passion, and identifies with all of the choices he has made. His life is pleasant, and he feels good because he has shaped it to be so. This life is better than the one that is also pleasant, but in many ways is artificial. If hedonism is true, then autonomy is not needed for a good life because one can experience pleasant feelings and attitudes without having any control over his life; and hence E and H live equally as good lives. E and H do not have equally as good lives, though, because one is controlled and one is autonomous. A good life requires having control over your life, making decisions that you

personally endorse, and generally feeling that you have the ultimate control over the direction of your life. Hedonism is therefore false.

For another example, Jenny and Jose both have an equal amount of attitudinal pleasure, but Jenny has close friends and social support, and Jose has no social connectedness to anyone. One would not truly be living well and achieving well-being if one had no close friends or social support. It would be difficult across a long span of time to be able to operate in every-day life feeling completely isolated. Yet if Jose owned an expensive pair of virtual reality goggles, and chose to spend all his time pretending to be somewhere/do things he wasn't, he might think very highly of his experiences and experience the same amount of attitudinal pleasure as Jenny. So hedonism would assert that their lives are equally as good, which is false.

Finally, let's look at Jack and Jill. Jill has a great deal of competence, and Jack is completely incompetent. If Jill is competent, and thus experiences feeling important, skilled, and appreciated at her job, this seems intuitively like a better life than one feeling unimportant, inefficient and unskilled. Being competent assures an individual that he/she is good at something, improving one's skills, and making a meaningful contribution to one's work/projects. This is important for one's mental health, and therefore functioning, and living a good life. Yet, Jack and Jill could be living equally as good lives, if they both experience the same amount of attitudinal pleasure. If hedonism asserts these lives are equal, it must be false.

The objections to hedonism show that there is more to a good life than simply experiencing pleasant feelings/attitudes. Our well-being is more complicated than this. Well-being includes nurturing our needs as humans. We need to satisfy our needs for achieving good relationships, completing solid work, and being involved in activities that we connect to. If we neglect our brain's complicated system that feeds into how we *feel*, and *think*, we will not live a

life where we feel and think good about our lives. Since hedonism does not involve the other components that may make us feel we have a satisfied life - such as projects and relationships that feel meaningful and important regardless of whatever current pleasant emotion or thought they bring with them, or experiencing autonomy - we know that hedonism is false. We need to examine a theory of well-being that does include these components. Our lives go better when we experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This is why I want to examine and defend eudaimonism. Specifically, I want to take on a more modern variation of eudaimonism. The variation of eudaimonism I will be working with is one laid out by philosopher Lorraine Besser, whose book Eudaimonic Ethics discusses eudaimonic well-being that focuses on our innate psychological needs.

Summary

This chapter discussed hedonism, a theory of well-being focused on the good life being determined by how much sensory pleasure one's life involved. I also explored its most plausible variation: attitudinal hedonism (IAH). This theory of well-being focused on the good life being determined by how much attitudinal pleasure one's life involved. However, even attitudinal hedonism proved to be false because necessary components of a good life such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness would not be necessary if IAH were true. The objections to hedonism suggest that eudaimonism would be a better theory, because as I will discuss, eudaimonism includes these necessary components of a good life.

II. Eudaimonism

Eudaimonism takes a different approach to the good life than hedonism does. This view of well-being is not concerned with pleasure, but with meaning and self-realization. According to

eudaimonism, well-being is the extent to which one is fully-functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In Eudaimonic Ethics, Lorraine Besser combines philosophy and psychology to defend an eudaimonic theory of well-being that focuses on satisfying one's innate psychological needs in order to thrive and fully function (2014). She is thus focused on understanding what humans are like and how they tend to behave. Relying on the work of Ryan and Deci (1995, 2000), Besser discusses our innate psychological needs. Just as we have innate biological needs, such as needing water, food, and exercise, so too, we have innate psychological needs. This concept of psychological needs is not universally understood in the same the way the need to satisfy our biological needs is understood. A psychological need comes from the mechanisms within our brain that organize our perceptions and mental states and that create our drives (Murray, 1938; as cited by Besser, 2014). Drives push us to engage in various experiences. Engaging in certain behaviors satisfies our psychological needs. In order to understand the kind of behaviors we need to engage in to satisfy these needs, we first need to understand what our innate psychological needs are. The following account of our psychological needs comes from Besser's work on eudaimonic well-being (2014).

Our Innate Psychological Needs

Humans have three innate psychological needs. These are the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Ryan and Deci's (2000) research determined that we need to satisfy our psychological needs, or functioning well will be near impossible (as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 14). We need to feel effective within our environment; to identify with the things we choose to do; and relate to others and have a sense of belonging in our community.

The need for competence is both having skills and being able to effectively put them to use. One needs to feel that they make an important contribution to their environments. Satisfying

the need for competence entails engaging in work/projects that challenges the agent and both puts to use and enhances their skills (Ryan & Deci, 2002; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 18).

Richard White's (1959) psychological studies determined that the need for competence is evolutionary. It is not only important to be successful in overcoming challenges we face in the workplace: the need itself comes from needing to be competent in our day-to-day physical and social worlds in order to overcome our biological limitations as humans (as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 19).

The need for relatedness is our psychological desire to feel connected to others. We need to not just believe we belong, but experience belongingness. According to research by Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan (2000), and Ryan & Deci (2000), we need an environment that “nurtures, provides warmth, and security” and makes it possible for people to successfully connect (as cited by Besser, 2014, p.19). In order to truly satisfy this need, we need to genuinely connect with others and have a sense of belonging that includes having people we both care about and know care about us in return. One-sided relationships simply prevent our ability to satisfy our need for relatedness, regardless of whether you are the receiver or giver of affection.

The need for autonomy is the need to feel that we are the source of our own actions. Reis et al.'s (2000) work shows that we need to feel either that the activities we engage in are our own or that we stand behind participating in them (as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 20). It is not so important that our behavior is a result of our own commands so much as it is important that behavior we exhibit is behavior we approve of and endorse. Thus, we can be responding to commands of others and still be behaving autonomously, so long as we endorse the behavior that the command requires by personally identifying with the goals or values they represent. Identification with our actions is the key to behaving autonomously. Now we can look at how

these innate needs contribute to eudaimonic well-being.

Eudaimonic Well-Being & Needs-Satisfaction

Satisfying these innate needs is associated with positive functioning and psychological thriving. The label of eudaimonic well-being comes from the connection between this psychological state and Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. The idea of *eudaimonia*, for Aristotle, means having achieved the highest good (Aristotle & Irwin, 1999). It is a state of flourishing, obtained from a way of living. It is reached when a person is able to live according to the human "good" or function. This entails living a virtuous life and being virtuous, specifically the life of "study" or *theoria* (understanding) (Aristotle & Irwin, 1999). *Eudaimonia* is sometimes translated as happiness, but it is not to be confused with happiness as a fleeting emotion, or state. It is the idea of living the good life, and achieving lasting, stable, happiness (also understood as flourishing) (Aristotle & Irwin, 1999). Besser's understanding of eudaimonic well-being diverges from the Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, however. She does adopt the eudaimonic label, and acknowledges that the two conceptions share in seeing well-being as "human development" and not a mere outcome, but a way of life with continuous "proper functioning" (2014, p. 22). However, Aristotle's idea of living well relied on rational activity in accord with the most virtuous activity (learning; *theoria*) (Aristotle & Irwin, 1999; Besser, 2014); and Besser's idea of living well and well-being is dependent upon the psychological conception of functioning well, which is dependent on needs satisfaction. We experience this well-being to the extent that we engage in behavior that satisfies our innate needs. Well-being is still a way of living, but with a focus on satisfying our psychological needs. She also doesn't equate living well and well-being with the Good Life. This is a component of her work that I reject. My own argument will diverge slightly from both the Aristotelian and Besser's because I am not arguing for an ethical account of the

human good.¹ I am focused on the idea of well-being, and what we need in order to flourish/live a fulfilling life (and will assume a morally good life follows from these conditions).

Besser's idea of the independent value of needs satisfaction is one that I want to rely on. She says that it is valuable in that it enables us to pursue our goals and satisfy our desires. It also feels good to be in a state of eudaimonic well-being. On its own, it is valuable in the sense that without the satisfaction of these needs, our ability to function and carry out tasks, goals, and so on, is challenged. She compares it to having the flu, and the appreciation of our physical health that comes to us when we start to feel better. When we don't satisfy our psychological needs, we soon appreciate optimal psychological functioning when we realize how much worse we feel. This understanding of human nature and well-being provides solid groundwork from which we can develop a strong account of how we ought to live. In order to better understand this, we need to further examine the implications of satisfying a couple of our needs. Besser goes into great detail to unpack our need for relatedness and autonomy, which comparatively (to our need for competence) do need more explaining.

Besser stresses that when we fail to relate well to others, we experience negative psychological, physical and cognitive implications. Psychologically, social exclusion can cause depression, anxiety, guilt, and grief, which results in increased incidences of mental illness (Rothberg & Jones, 1987; Trout, 1980; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 35). Physically, having a strong social network with social integration and close relationships is correlated with lower death rates (Lynch, 1979; as cited by Besser 2014, p. 35); and higher rates of cancer survival and

¹ Besser's work within this book is to support a moral theory of human behavior. Besser argues that eudaimonism is the truth about well-being, and that the person who flourishes is one who lives well. The person who lives well will thereby act morally permissibly, and will develop good character. She believes that this theory gives us an outline of how we ought to behave, because it is based on human nature, and so no human expectation will be beyond what humans are capable of. I am not interested specifically in a moral theory, so much as I am interested in substantive conditions for flourishing (if acting morally follows from that, all the better).

improved responses to stress (Goodwin, Hunt, Key, & Samet, 1987; DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 35). It also provides a sense of stability in one's life and self-worth (Cohen & Wills, 1985; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 36). Cognitively, research by Baumeister & DeWall (2005), and Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss (2002, 2005) demonstrates that lack of relatedness significantly lowers executive functioning, which controls our ability to organize tasks, manage frustration, focus, remember, and self regulate (as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 36-37). The ability to self-regulate is one's ability to regulate one's own thoughts, behaviors, and actions, accordingly. When one experiences social exclusion, Besser drew from the studies results that it is not the emotional reaction of feeling upset about being alone that thwarts cognitive abilities, but the direct effect of one's need for relatedness being frustrated. People tend to think that they can get by without relating well to others, having frequent positive social interactions, or treating others well, but in reality doing so will ultimately cause negative consequences.

In terms of whom we need to relate well to, it is important to have close, personal relationships that make us feel warm and secure. Having close friendships, or a significant other, is necessary in satisfying our need for relatedness. However, strictly having an exclusive close group of people we feel we belong with is not enough to satisfy this psychological need. Any instance of being ostracized can greatly cause an individual to reap negative consequences (Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 39). Feeling rejected, even in an isolated situation, causes individuals to feel more vulnerable to rejection and can cause them to be unable to function positively if they do not find a way to rise above it. Individuals can get caught in a vicious cycle where they feel so vulnerable to rejection that they do not engage in the positive social interaction they need and thus continue to be/feel excluded, further damaging

their ability to positively function (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Zadro et al., 2004; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 39). It is important to continuously widen our circle, and engage in positive social interaction as much as possible. Widening our circles means that it is not enough to simply have a close group of friends whom you relate well to, and everyone else is ignored or treated without respect. It benefits us to be open to meeting new people, being kind to those we're introduced to and work with, and not snubbing those who aren't already a part of our inner circle. "What goes around comes back around" is a helpful saying to remember when trying to understand this idea, also. The nicer and more open you are to others, the nicer and more open others will be to you. Since we psychologically need to have positive social interactions, the more we increase the number of those interactions the more this need will be satisfied. People who think they do not need others, or who think they prefer only the company and acceptance of a select few, are actually engaging in self-destructive behavior because we all need constant positive social interactions in order to satisfy our need for relatedness (Williams & Sommer, 1997; Ciarocco, Sommer, & Baumeister, 2001; cited by Besser, 2014, p. 40).

When it comes to how we should interact with others in order to satisfy our need for relatedness, one thing that has been determined is that we need two-way relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 42). It is not enough to simply have others who like us, or think well of us; nor is it enough to solely like and think well of others. We need to engage in relationships where we both care about the other person, and are cared about in return. With our need for relatedness, when one focuses on the person she is developing a relationship with, and the attention is on respecting and caring about that other person, and not on some self-related end goal, then a genuine relationship with healthy attachment can develop and our need for relatedness can be satisfied (Besser, 2014;

Crocker, Olivier, & Nuer, 2009, as cited by Besser, p. 44). Satisfying the need for relatedness requires positive social interaction, which includes both parties caring about and respecting the other. Humans have selfish tendencies, so in order to avoid pain as a result of our social interactions, we often have to put those natural tendencies aside and be open and compassionate towards others (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; as cited by Besser, 2014, p.46-47). We have to develop the cognitive and emotional capacities that make respecting others and their feelings possible. Now that we have an understanding of our need for relatedness, let's examine our need for autonomy.

The need for autonomy is a need for a specific kind of experience, just as competence and relatedness are. It is satisfied by the experience of feeling that "our actions originate within ourselves," something that Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci say comes when one is acting in accordance with one's interests, values, and beliefs (2010; as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 52). Autonomy arises from the extent to which we identify with the corresponding values and goals of the action. Besser acknowledges Ryan and Connell's (1989) findings that it is essentially the endorsement of and identification with our actions that make us autonomous. Even if the action is the result of a demand or request of another person, if our motivations to carry out the action are our own, then we can act autonomously, because we perceive the action as being our own (as cited by Besser, 2014, p. 52). Identification with an action or decision involves acting in a way that coincides with our own beliefs, values, and interests. For example, when Haley's boss tells her to please reach out to their clients and inform them of a new change to the company that may affect them, if Haley also personally believes that this is an important thing to do and identifies with the reasons she has for accepting this demand, then she is acting autonomously.

Integration is also important, it seems. One needs to act according to one's values/beliefs, but also in the best interest of one's self and what would satisfy one's psychological needs. To tie it all together, one needs to look at his or her core self when acting, including one's psychological needs. One may endorse his actions, but if one's actions hurt his need for relatedness or competence, then there is integration missing from his identification, making his actions less autonomous.²

Summary

This chapter explained Besser's theory of eudaimonic well-being, a theory that sees well-being as a way of living that focuses on fully functioning. In order to fully function, one needs to satisfy one's innate psychological needs. These needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. I examined her explanations of each of these needs, based on empirical research she reviewed, particularly Ryan and Deci's various studies. I am assuming that Besser is right about flourishing requiring needs-satisfaction. Assuming that Besser is correct, then mindfulness is a necessary component for satisfying our needs and should thus be considered an important component of well-being. This will be explained in chapter three.

III. Mindfulness & Why it Matters for Eudaimonic Well-Being

² The ideas presented above on identification and endorsement of our actions reflect Besser's personal combing through of various models of identification. She discusses procedural vs. substantive models, specifically mentioning Frankfurt's procedural model and Watson's substantive model. Procedural models define actions as autonomous so long as the agent endorses them through a reflective self-evaluation process (2014, p. 55). Substantive models require that there be "substantive restrictions of the content of the reasons with which we can identify" (2014, p.63). This means acting in accordance with our values, and not giving into mere desires. The included ideas on identification above is a reflection of substantive models, as well as the work of Ryan's (1993) description of one being the perceived "locus of causality" (Besser, 2014, p. 64), and Besser's added analysis on the importance of our innate psychological needs being the essential aspect of ourselves (2014, p. 67).

Now that a thorough account of eudaimonic well-being has been laid out, I want to delve into another component of achieving the Good Life that I believe is often neglected in philosophical accounts of well-being: mindfulness. Mindfulness, here, is a mental state. Specifically, it is a psychological state of pure moment-to-moment awareness (Davis and Hayes, 2012; Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, Goolkasian, 2010). When in a state of pure mindfulness, one is aware of one's experiences without judgement of the experience, or thoughts that come up (Davis and Hayes, 2012). Mindfulness began to be integrated into western medicine and psychology in the 1950s and 60s. By the late 1970s, mindfulness meditation was explored as a method of enhancing psychological well-being (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011).

Being mindful is difficult for most people because we live in a world where we are often multitasking and encouraged to engage in distracting activities, such as watching TV, sending emails, posting things on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat while also engaged in other activities. I will present the results of a several studies that explored the effects of mindfulness on cognitive abilities and psychological well-being. The studies are exploring mindfulness meditation practices, but what mindfulness trainings/practices do is help people obtain a mental state of mindfulness; hence these studies demonstrate the effects of mindfulness. In order to satisfy the three psychological needs necessary for achieving well-being, I will argue that it is necessary to be able to obtain this mental state of pure awareness. It is necessary for one's well-being because if one is not truly aware, or focused, one is not truly experiencing anything. One cannot truly experience competence if one is not fully present, and one cannot act autonomously if one is not able to focus on the experiences one wants to focus on. After the results of the studies have been presented, I will explain why examining the benefits of practicing mindfulness

is important, and what it shows about our psychological health without it.

Mindfulness Studies

In a review of neuropsychological findings, Alberto Chiesa, Raffaella Calati, and Alessandro Serretti looked at whether or not mindfulness training improved cognitive abilities (2011). Specifically, they were looking at mindfulness meditation practices. They reviewed five databases and twenty-three studies, which looked at measures of cognition including attention, memory, executive functioning, and various miscellaneous measures. They found that early stages of mindfulness training could be correlated with a substantial enhancement of selective and executive attention, and that later stages could be more correlated with enhanced “unfocused sustained attention” skills (Chiesa et al, 2011). Their research highlights include the idea that mindfulness training could improve domains of attention, memory, and executive functioning. They also concluded that each different subcomponent of mindfulness training has different effects on cognition. However, they found that there were serious limitations to the methodological and theoretical components of these studies, which limits the validity of their interpretations of the evidence from these studies. Despite these limitations, their findings are supported by other studies conducted on mindfulness training.

For example, Daphne M. Davis and Jeffrey A. Hayes published an article “What are the Benefits of Mindfulness,” in which they examined the empirically supported benefits of mindfulness (2012). Davis and Hayes found that research verified several benefits of mindfulness meditation, including: decreased rumination, stress reduction, boosts to working memory, enhanced focused, decreased emotional reactivity, increased cognitive flexibility, and relationship satisfaction. They also found that mindfulness has been shown to improve cognition related to the middle prefrontal lobe such as insight about the self, morality, and intuition and

fear regulation. Immune functioning, well-being, and reductions in psychological distress were also noted benefits. These findings are important because they show that our cognitive functioning, such as our ability to focus, reactivity to stress, and emotional reactivity, are improved by obtaining a mental state of mindfulness. These improvements in cognitive functioning would make one more able to perform competently, and act autonomously (because one would be acting with more focus and rationality, and therefore more able to act according to values rather than emotions). Relationships would also benefit from one being more focused and calm. This suggests that the more mindful one is, the more one is able to satisfy one's innate needs and therefore flourish.

Davis and Hayes had mentioned improvement in immune functioning as a benefit to increased mindfulness (usually obtained via meditation practices). This is an area of interest for many studying the effects of mindfulness meditation (MM), including Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller, Santorelli, Urbanowski, Harrington, Bonus, and Sheridan, who all conducted a study exploring the effects of MM on the brain and immune function (2003). They used a well-known 8-week clinical training program on mindfulness meditation to do a randomized, controlled study in a work environment with healthy employees. A significant increase in left-sided anterior activation, a pattern that has been known to be associated with positive affect, was reported amongst the meditators more than non-meditators. They also found an increase in antibodies to the influenza vaccine in the meditation group. They found ultimately that this short-term program in mindfulness meditation produces demonstrable effects on the brain and the immune system. This suggests that meditation may positively alter brain and immune function, as well as provide other health benefits. Those who meditate spend increased amounts of time in a state of mindfulness, and the immune system seems to be responding to

significantly decreased levels of stress due to increased mindfulness. This may be due to psychological benefits of this mental state, suggested by the association with positive affect. Those who are in an enhanced psychological state are in a better position to engage in behaviors necessary for having a well-functioning psyche because they are spending less time ruminating, or holding onto stressors, and are getting sick less often. The healthier someone is, the more one is likely to engage in positive social interactions, or be able to make executive decisions and produce his or her best work. The benefits of mindfulness can be observed in those who practice it briefly as well.

Fadel Zeidan, Susan K. Johnson, Bruce J. Diamond, Zhanna David, and Paula Goolkasian examined the effects of brief mindfulness meditation training on cognition to see if short-term meditation practices had any of the same effects long-term practices did (2010, referencing Cahn & Polich, 2006; Davidson et al., 2005; Jha, Krompinger & Baime, 2007; and Kozhemikov, Louchakova, Josipovic, & Motes, 2009). They knew that mindfulness training heightens moment-to-moment awareness of the self and environment, thereby improving metacognitive processing. This study built on these previous ones (2009; Tang et al., 2007), and examined whether brief mindfulness meditation training could affect cognitive tasks that placed demand on areas of one's working memory, sustained attention, visual coding, and verbal fluency. They expected that brief mindfulness meditation training (MMT), compared to the control group (who had to listen to an audiobook recording of *The Hobbit*), would enhance positive mood. They also expected improvement on the cognitive tasks mentioned above from the MMT group.

Both groups improved from session 1 to 4, in that depression, anger, tension, and confusion decreased. Mediation was more effective at reducing fatigue than listening to the

audiobook however. Anxiety levels significantly dropped in the meditation group, but not in the book listening group. The brief meditation group also experienced improved cognitive performance. In conclusion, 4 days of MMT (20 min./day) was effective in significantly increasing mindfulness scores compared to the active control group. The MMT encouraged significant positive effects on several cognitive tasks, but between the meditation group and the control group, mood improved for both groups. Evidence suggests that brief MMT enhances sustained attention, and suggests that immediate effects of MMT are associated with not only mood improvement, but also with more in depth cognitive processing skills.

The direct psychological benefits of mindfulness have also received attention from researchers. Keng et al. looked at the effects of mindfulness on psychological health by reviewing a collection of empirical studies on different kinds of mindfulness training (2011). This paper reviewed correlational, controlled, and laboratory studies. I will be focusing on the correlational and laboratory studies reviewed. There are a variety of mindfulness based therapies/training, and included in this study were mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR), mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).

The correlational research on mindfulness and psychological health showed many positive associations between mindfulness and overall life satisfaction. Trait mindfulness, which is the extent to which mindfulness is a general trait-like tendency to be mindful on a day-to-day basis, is measured through various questionnaires typically. This was the first component of mindfulness that they examined, and after reviewing many studies they found that trait mindfulness is correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction, agreeableness, conscientiousness, vitality, self-esteem, empathy, sense of autonomy, competence, optimism, and pleasant affect.

There were also negative correlations between mindfulness and depression, neuroticism, absent mindedness, dissociation, rumination, cognitive reactivity, social anxiety, difficulties in emotion regulation, experiential avoidance, alexithymia (a difficulty in experiencing, expressing, or describing emotion), intensity of delusional experience when suffering from a form of psychosis, and general psychological symptoms. These findings are supportive of the idea that mindfulness is an important component of one's well-being. Those who have the tendency to be mindful rank their life satisfaction as higher and, as this study shows, feel more autonomous and competent. These are two of our three innate psychological needs that we need to continuously satisfy in order to have well-being. They also appear to be overall psychologically functioning better, suggesting they are flourishing more than those who do not meditate.

The research also looked at the specific relationship between mindfulness and cognitive processes that may have positive/important implications for psychological health. For example, one study Keng et al. looked at focused on college students and found a decrease in negative automatic thoughts and an enhanced ability to let go of those thoughts when they occurred, correlated with mindfulness (Frewen, Evans, Maraj, Dozois, & Partridge, 2008; cited 2011). Keng et al. also found that two studies showed a correlation between mindfulness and increased sustained attention (Schmertz, Anderson, & Robins, 2009; cited 2011) as well as persistence (Evans, Baer, & Segerstrom, 2009; cited 2011).

Keng et al. then presented the correlational relationship between mindfulness meditation and psychological health. Many of the conclusions from the findings they reviewed suggested the same benefits as discussed above such as overall increased well-being, decreased rumination, and improved emotion regulation. They found that one study (Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo, 2007) suggested mindfulness meditation practices enhance psychological well-being by increasing

mindfulness; and reducing reactivity to emotional stimuli by helping one be better at disengaging attention from stimuli. To summarize their overall findings from correlational research, mindfulness is positively associated with levels of positive affect, life satisfaction, vitality and adaptive emotion regulation. It is also associated with decreased negative affect and psychopathological symptoms.

Keng et al. reviewed laboratory studies of mindfulness as well, which overall suggested positive psychological effects. The reviewed laboratory studies focused on immediate effects of mindfulness interventions, specifically examining the effects of these interventions on emotion-related processes. These included: “recovery from dysphoric mood, emotional reactivity to aversive or emotionally provocative stimuli, and willingness to return to or persist on an unpleasant task” (Keng et al., 2011; p. 9). They discussed several studies that examined the effects of various mindfulness interventions, and some focused on individuals more prone to anxiety and panic disorder. One study presented a “biological challenge” (inhaling carbon dioxide-enriched air), and used mindfulness as an emotion regulation strategy (Eifert and Heffner, 2003; cited 2011). For those who scored high on anxiety sensitivity tests, they did this study using three different condition groups: one that had received brief acceptance training, one that received breathing retraining, and then no training. Those who had practiced acceptance training had less fear and catastrophic thoughts, and exhibited lower behavioral avoidance. Keng et al. found these studies to suggest that effective strategies for decreasing anxiety and avoidance during physiological arousal are “mindful observation and acceptance of emotional responses,” for those prone to anxiety, panic disorder, or who are emotionally avoidant (2011). They ultimately found the laboratory studies to suggest that brief mindfulness training can have the

immediate benefits as suggested previously: recovery from dysphoric mood, and improvement in emotional reactivity to negative stimuli.

The findings from Keng et al.'s review suggest something important when it comes to those who struggle with anxiety, panic disorder, and so on: these people are better able to cope when mindfulness interventions are implemented. This is a reminder that those who suffer from mental illnesses are often suffering from mental states that leave them ruminating on either the past or the future, or an irrational idea of the current moment. Being mindful brings people to the present and changes the negative reactions people have to situations. Being able to be in the moment, and not worrying about what will happen, or dwelling on what has happened, is something that I argue is necessary for best satisfying our psychological needs. One can't make rational decisions if their mental health is suffering, and if one can't make rational decisions, then one most likely will not engage in the necessary behaviors for satisfying one's needs. The reverse is also true, which is if one does not satisfy his needs, one's mental health will suffer, and thus begins a vicious cycle. This is why I believe mindfulness is a necessary condition for satisfying our needs because it is the necessary mental state for doing what is best for one's self based on current life circumstances.

Summary of What Mindfulness Studies Suggest About Mindfulness & Our Wellbeing

The above studies suggest various cognitive improvements from mindfulness meditation that show it is a mental state of mindfulness that enhances those cognitive improvements. Cognitive improvements (such as with our working memory or focused attention) are beneficial to our ability to make rational decisions, and get things done adequately. There are psychological benefits as well, demonstrated by the above research, which showed decreased emotional reactions to negative events, decreased rumination, and decreased anxiety and depression levels.

These cognitive and psychological benefits also help in having a positive outlook on life; and helping one to make logical and rational decisions rather than decisions based on emotional responses and excessive attention on the self. Why is this important? It's important because those psychological needs that Besser's work explained are thwarted when one's cognition and psyche are "clogged," if you will, by an inability to focus (therefore decreasing important brain activity that occurs when one is able to maintain concentration) due to constant distraction, or due to mental health issues such as increased anxiety and depression levels.

While psychological functioning is dependent on satisfying our innate psychological needs, sometimes one's current mental state also gets in the way of being able to satisfy those needs, leading to a decreased ability to function. It can be a vicious cycle. In the following section, I will explain how technology (specifically frequently accessed screens and involvement in social networking sites) often becomes a major contributor to the confounding variables that get in the way of satisfying our innate needs. I argue that mindfulness is the bridge that helps us to satisfy these needs, which will become clearer when one better understands the issue. Looking at what people's cognitive and psychological states are before they practiced increased mindfulness is very telling. If someone is mentally suffering and mindfulness training helps him or her to function, this says something about the importance of obtaining a purely aware state. If people never had this mental state, I am arguing that their innate psychological needs would not be satisfied, because you cannot achieve anything without ever being mindful.

IV. Why Certain Technology Threatens Our Well-Being

Studies on our culture's relationship with certain forms of technology, namely our various screens, social apps, the internet, and email, have demonstrated several concerning

observations: decreased attention spans and an addiction to distraction (Walton, 2012; Gregoire, 2014; Schwartz, 2015) decreased reports of life satisfaction (Shakaya and Christakis, 2016); increased levels of anxiety and depression (Seabrook, Kern, and Rickard, 2016; Shwartz, 2015); and therefore overall decreased well-being. I'm going to break this up into two different issues resulting from increased relationships with screens and social media: the addiction to distraction (which makes mindfulness a less and less frequently obtained mental state, which then threatens our need for competence and autonomy); and the breaking down of positive social interaction as a result of increased time spent on social networking sites (which makes satisfying our need for relatedness very difficult).

The Addiction to Distraction: A Threat to Autonomy and Competence

A. Addiction to Distraction

The addiction to distraction is unfortunately not a cute term that I made up, but instead is an increasingly popular phrase that is used more and more as our society develops more and more of a screen-happy, mega-connected, culture. This culture is perpetuated by advancements in technology, designed to make all of our “tasks” and hobbies accessible on one or two devices, upon which we are truly dependent. The more accessible things are, the more we're encouraged to engage in them. The more we engage in them, the more accustomed to this habit we become, and soon we are checking our email every 10 minutes, reading the news, posting or scrolling on Facebook, and sending text messages all on one device. Simply being connected to the Internet itself is an addiction, and a major component of the addiction to distraction that people experience.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine defines addiction as “a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry” which leads to various

manifestations that are reflected “in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors” (2011). In his article, “Addicted to Distraction,” Tony Schwartz wrote: “Addiction is the relentless pull to a substance or an activity that becomes so compulsive it ultimately interferes with everyday life” (2015). Addiction to distraction would then be the relentless pull to be constantly changing one’s attention: opening Facebook again even though you were just on it; checking your email again for no legitimate reason; or clicking the “home” button on your phone to see if there’s a notification or a message - even though you didn’t hear a notification and you’re in the middle of having a real conversation with someone; and doing this so frequently that it is compulsive and ultimately interfering with your everyday life. This is also your brain having inaccurately “reprogrammed” itself, if you will, to receive a sense of reward and motivation from constant new stimulus (which is what it seeks when you want to check a new website, or Facebook, or for texts, compulsively). This is not simply a flaw of the users, but rather the tech industry’s intention.

The addiction and attachment that formulates from these devices and apps is an intention of their design. Bianca Bosker wrote a profile on Tristan Harris in the Atlantic, that brings attention to the reality of this design flaw (2016). Harris, former product philosopher for Google, and co-founder of “Time Well Spent,” became hyper-aware of this issue when studying at Stanford, where he had joined the Persuasive Technology Lab run by B.J. Foggs. In this lab, Foggs teaches something he coined “behavior design,” and it has created a massive following by entrepreneurs. Behavior design capitalizes on behavior psychology, and how to design so that human behavior is changed (Stanford Persuasive Tech Lab, NA). The content of this course/lab is useful for helping to create habit-forming software; for example, the co-founder of Instagram was a former student. Harris studied conditioning methods in Fogg’s course. In a classic

Pavlov's dog scenario, we are trained to continue posting things on social media because we receive positive reinforcement for doing so. Post a picture, receive a "like." Post a better picture, receive more "likes." The receiving of a "like" is positive reinforcement to post again. Harris says that the most successful sites and apps use our deeply rooted human needs in order to get users attached. He refers to these persuasive techniques as "hacking techniques," which work the same way sugar, salt, and fat do in order to encourage binge eating in the junk food industry (Bosker, 2016).

Harris explains that social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are addicting because they use "variable rewards," which means they are delivered at random and not on a set schedule (Bosker, 2016). Rewards of this style quickly reinforce behavior and do so strongly. Also, Harris notes that the alerts we receive from Facebook are in red, which is a trigger color. Seeing our names also cues an innate sense of social obligation. We are surrounded by these social networking apps that notify us on our phones whenever someone has tagged us or mentioned us in something, and due to the way these notifications are designed, we end up in a vicious cycle of feeling indebted to others because we constantly feel we are needing to respond to someone and be available to them. Tech companies hire consultants to help them create services that become addictive to users. A major consultant is Nir Nyal, author of *How to Build Habit Forming Products*, who has both lectured and consulted for organizations that include LinkedIn and Instagram (Bosker, 2016). Hence the idea that websites, including the most commonly used social networking sites, are addicting is not just a casual complaint that people express; nor is it one that is due to certain people having weak-wills, or any other personal faults. It is a deliberate scheme by the tech industry to keep us plugged into their sites and products. Our

smartphones, tablets, and the apps that become available with them are all hooking us and training us to want to check them, and engage with them.

Internet addiction has emerged as a genuine issue in our society over the last decade, and one that seems destined to continue to grow. Forbes Magazine in 2012 wrote an article called “Internet Addiction: the New Mental Health Disorder?” that discussed the term “Internet use disorder, and several implications it would have on a sufferer (Walton). The article acknowledged that the disorder was not one currently in the DSM, but that it may become recognized in the future. The American Psychiatric Association noted that Internet addiction is not currently in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM 5), but the latest edition does have a section on Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) and that it is something needing further research (APA, 2016). The APA describes IGD as a severe preoccupation with Internet gaming, a loss of interest in other activities, withdrawal symptoms when not using, and an increased tolerance where the agent needs more and more time spent online in order to receive the same effects (2016). It is clear though, that this issue extends beyond games and to general Internet use as well. There is clearly an immense preoccupation with social networking sites in particular, and a loss of interest in other activities and focus on other tasks.

Carolyn Gregoire, in an article in the Huffington Post, discusses the distracting element that our iPhones present in our daily lives (2014). Gregoire reported that according to studies we check our phones approximately 110 times a day. Researchers from Southern Maine University conducted a study testing how distracting even the presence of our iPhone can be (Gregoire, 2014; Thornton, B., Faires, A., Robbins, M., & Rollins, E., 2014). Two groups were given several tasks, and the group that had their phones out and present for the task did significantly worse than the group with their phones not present. Even the presence of our phone when

completing work takes away from our executive functioning capabilities because we are still distracted by it even when not directly engaging with it. The researchers hypothesized that this was due to the fact that our phones provide communication, a sense of connection and access to our social networks; in effect, this reminds us of what is going on out there on sites and with our friends and that we are not currently a part of it which causes a distracting anxiety to be a part of it.

In 2015, Tony Schwartz wrote an article for the *New York Times*, in which he lamented over his own degree of addiction to the Internet (2015). Schwartz refers to Nicholas Carr, author of “The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains” who writes: “the Net is designed to be an interruption system, a machine geared to dividing attention. We willingly accept the loss of concentration and focus, the division of our attention and the fragmentation of our thoughts, in return for the wealth of compelling or at least diverting information we receive” (as cited by Schwartz, 2015). Schwartz said he felt he was unable to disconnect, constantly wanting to check his email or navigate various sites online. He went from reading constantly to letting books pile up for years because he no longer had the attention span to sit down and read for a solid amount of time. It came to a point where he knew detoxing was the next step he needed to take, and he had his daughter disconnect him from the web and his email on both his phone and his laptop while they were on vacation. Schwartz reported withdrawal pangs at first. However, each day he felt more and more relaxed, less anxious, and more able to focus. The experience of increased anxiety and decreased focus, due to a developed attachment to the Internet and the Internet’s distracting nature, can happen to anyone. Schwartz and Carr demonstrate real-life examples of the issues that Harris is working to make more public.

Our culture encourages this addiction to distraction. There are not boundaries for when it is or is not appropriate to be reached. For example, the U.S. does not implement laws that discourage employers from sending emails to employees past a certain hour, and which may allow employees the right to not check their emails past certain hours. France implemented a law that allows employees to fully clock-out at the end of the workday and not be expected to check emails for their employers past a certain hour agreed upon by employer and employee (Morris, 2017). This law emerged from the pleas of employees, who felt that their workday did not end when they left the office: an issue that was a strain on their personal lives and the much-needed time to recharge. Benoit Hamon, a French legislator, was quoted saying that employees felt as if they “leave the office, but they do not leave their work. They remain attached by a kind of electronic leash—like a dog” (Morris, 2017). Checking one’s email is one of many gateways into getting lost on never ending Internet searches, and online engagement. The fact that many countries, including the U.S., don’t have any set regulations over when to be available online for work perpetuates the feeling of needing to be connected and being obligated to others that Harris had discussed in his interview with Bosker.

B. How it Threatens Autonomy & Competence

We know that this feeling of addiction, and a decreased feeling of control over one’s attention, is real. Addiction can diminish one’s well-being. When we look at well-being as defined with a eudaimonic emphasis on functioning, and with functioning depending on satisfying one’s psychological needs, we can see that the addiction to distraction directly attacks one’s autonomy and one’s degree of competence. It does so by replacing what would be a general mental state of mindfulness with one needing a constant distraction of new stimuli. As discussed earlier, our well-being is not simply a state, but rather a way of living if eudaimonism

is true. Satisfaction of innate psychological needs requires engaging in certain kinds of experiences. This is why an addiction to a certain kind of behavior (which is what an addiction to distraction, stemming from an addiction to our screens, social media, and the internet, is) can be so dangerous: it takes away from engagement in other experiences necessary for satisfying our innate psychological needs. I will explain how autonomy is threatened by addiction to distraction and then the way in which competence is threatened.

Autonomy, we know, comes from identifying with and endorsing our actions. We also know that we need to have this sense of autonomous control over our behavior (along with the satisfaction of our other psychological needs) in order to fully-function and maintain our well-being. If someone is constantly checking his/her email, and then becoming lost in a cycle of reading new emails, following links to other sites, checking Twitter/Facebook/Instagram, and so on, then this creates a wired brain (a brain constantly “buzzing,” needing to do something) with a shorter attention span. Something that Schwartz’s experience draws attention to is the way in which his engagement with hobbies and interests that he had maintained his whole life (and learned to identify with) was falling to the wayside with his addiction to being online. If there are certain behaviors, interests, or hobbies that he endorses and identifies with as his own, this becomes an integral part of who he is and what makes him an autonomous agent. Becoming unable to engage in these behaviors due to a growing need to be stimulated with new and quick bursts of information, and to check one’s phone, email, and so on, takes away from an agent’s autonomy. The agent wants to engage in certain behavior but is no longer able to muster the interest or focus to do so.

Once aware of this state, as Schwartz was, and as Harris was on a grand scale, it is difficult to ignore the sense of anxiety and concern that arises because people are unable to fully

put their attention and energy into other activities when these devices or sites are present. They want to engage in and put their in energy into other activities/experiences, but they can feel the constant pull to check their phones, or open up other sites when they are using the internet on a computer, and end up giving into it. It's hard not to give in, when most of these sites and certain devices are designed to trigger your psychological need for human approval/connection (Harris, 2016, as cited by Bosker, 2016). It makes people worried when they don't think that they will be able to accomplish what they want, or do the things they are interested in. It causes concern when suddenly people are finding themselves glued to a device or a website, instead of noticing what is going on around them or engaging in the activities they were supposed to be engaged in.

This is a difficult issue to address because unlike addictions to substances, one cannot really "quit" the Internet, or having a screen of some sort in one's life. Our society has made these things an integral part of our lives: you cannot function in the workplace or even in school without the Internet or some form a computer. Thus, one ends up engaging in behavior that one does not endorse or identify with, which is constantly checking devices and searching sites, out of an addiction to the stimulation and positive reinforcements, when what one really wants to be doing is reading, writing, or engaging in meaningful conversation with a friend. This behavior therefore becomes diminishing to one's autonomy. Our well-being requires autonomy, hence some people are not able to achieve well-being and thus live a fulfilling life, thanks to this relationship our society has implemented between us and our smartphones, the internet, and social media. Our need for competence is also threatened by the addictive nature of these devices and sites.

Our need for competence requires being engaged in work that complements as well as improves our skills, and makes us feel that our work is positively contributing to something. This

involves being on top of things, working efficiently, being focused, and incredibly aware of the tasks at hand. The same addictive behavior that comes from an attachment to screens, the Internet, and social media that diminishes our autonomy, also diminishes our ability to be competent individuals. Our feeling of competency is threatened when we cannot focus and accomplish work the way we would if we could pay attention for longer. The case mentioned earlier, reported by Gregoire, is a great example of deteriorated competency by the distraction of our iPhones (or any smartphone). When our phones or any other outlet to the Internet, email, or social media is present, that alone is a major distraction, which decreases a person's executive functioning. People have become so addicted to checking these devices and various sites, and to feeling the need to always be connected, that even the temptation alone is detrimental to the work a person gets done. Actually checking, and therefore actively diverting one's attention, is even more detrimental to one's quality of work, the skills one could be developing, and how overall competent one is and feels.

There are plenty of people who are actively engaging in the addictive behavior while trying to get work done. That's why the behavior is distractive - it is usually being engaged in instead of various other behaviors we are supposed to be engaging in. A student cannot do his best work, when he is dividing his attention between writing, checking Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and the various other diversions that come along as a result of being connected to the Internet. An employee cannot do her best work, and make the most positive difference she can to her company, when she is also dividing her attention amongst these sites and devices. The fact that checking (email, Facebook, the device itself) is a compulsion, and not even an attempt at engaging in productive multi-tasking, means that it is just pure distractive multitasking.

Therefore this addiction to distraction is simply taking away from the work or activity an individual should be doing and is also taking away from the quality of the work being done. When one does not do work that is one's best quality, or fails to utilize his/her full potential, one does not challenge oneself or skills the way one should; or make the kind of contributions that one otherwise would. The addiction to distraction therefore diminishes one's competency. We have seen how certain technological devices, the Internet, and social networking sites can diminish one's autonomy and competence by diminishing the frequency of a mindfulness. If one is addicted to distraction, one is definitely struggling to maintain mindful states. Now let's look at the issue that arises with our need for relatedness, the last of our innate psychological needs.

The Breaking Down of Positive Social Interaction

Social media is the main culprit for deterioration of our satisfaction of relatedness. More time spent on SNS (social networking sites) means less time spent actually interacting with people. The American Psychological Association shared an interview with Sherry Turkle, social psychologist and author of *Alone Together*. Her book made a point that those who are more connected online are more and more isolated in their offline lives. They feel more lonely and distant, and it leads to emotional disconnection, mental fatigue, and anxiety (Price, 2011). Turkle expressed various concerns with our changing means of interaction with others especially amongst youth. One concern was that it gives people an alternative to dealing with situations face-to-face, and lets them run away instead of learning to handle negative social moments. People are able to check-out whenever they want, turning to their phones and scrolling through Facebook instead of being present and learning how to deal with current moment events.

When it comes to how this impacts our personal relationships, many people are adding and "connecting" to others over Facebook with whom they have no real relationship or

connection to. Turkle says that this gives people a sense of community and distraction, which makes them less likely to try and engage beyond this. It creates an illusion of company and relationships, without the demands of friendship or intimacy. This practice of reduced intimacy carries over into how we are with those with whom we actually do have relationships with. We give people we are not with more time and attention than those we are with when we spend time scrolling through social media sites rather than talking to our friends/family. This constant connection to devices doesn't stop when we are with people, so we trade in genuine communication and relationship building for the empty glare of a screen. She says that children experience frustration when they cannot receive eye contact from their parents, who are on their phones. Turkle remarks that when we don't teach kids how to be alone "they will always be lonely" (2011). People who are always connected become dependent upon the presence of others for validation of their every action. This is evidence for the claim that the more you engage in a social world online, the less you engage face-to-face. We need this genuine face-to-face interaction to actually receive the benefits of positive social interaction that we need, as Besser argued based on empirical research.

In a study looking at Facebook use and well-being, Shakya and Christakis measured mental health as correlated with participants' use of Facebook, and found that while having more Facebook friends was associated with better mental health, actual engagement with the site according to the three ways they measured it was correlated with worse mental health (2016). Important to note is that the reported friends that one actually interacted with frequently was associated with better mental health, suggesting that genuine relationships/social support is associated with better mental health. Also, there was an association between using Facebook and

having a lower reported life satisfaction, while having real, offline, friends that one interacts with was associated with higher life satisfaction. This is evidence supporting the need for relatedness.

This leads me to believe that people who spend more time engaged with SNS have fewer interactions face to face, while also diminishing the quality of their time spent with actual people. People are engaging more online, and so appearing to be more connected, but they are clearly experiencing a disconnection. The disconnect appears to come from the fact that individuals opt out of experiencing and dealing with real-life social situations, instead turning to checking their phones and various social media sites, which provide a sense of attention and companionship while also being designed to positively reinforce engagement behavior, and therefore keeping users hooked. Since people are hooked and constantly checking these devices and social apps, even when individuals are with people, they are not fully engaging. When one does not give others one's full attention, one does not fully experience what one's friends or family are saying to him or her, nor is one truly engaging with them. If one does not fully engage with those one interacts with, one does not experience the positive social interaction one needs. Therefore our innate psychological need for relatedness is threatened by increased engagement with SNS.

The Other Side of the Argument

There are studies that suggest opposite ideas, including that being on Facebook is associated with increased well-being, and that online social networks relieves anxiety and depression. One such study, conducted by Nabi, Prestin, and Jiyeon, called "Facebook Friends with (Health) Benefits? Exploring Social Network Site Use and Perceptions of Social Support, Stress, and Well-Being," hypothesized that having more Facebook friends would lead to a greater feeling of social support, which would reduce stress, thereby reducing physical illness

and improving psychological well-being (2013). They found that the number of Facebook friends one had was directly related to one's life satisfaction, and that their hypotheses were supported. However, this study presented serious limitations in its results, including the fact that once the surveyors' interpersonal network (the network of people that participants actually had relations with) size was included, the positive effects of having lots of Facebook friends were minimized. While they did find associations between individuals with greater life stressors and positive influence of Facebook friends, their findings were inconsistent with past studies such as Kim and Lee, who did not find that the relationship between number of Facebook friends and psychological well-being was facilitated by the perceived social support of one's Facebook friends (2011). There is some controversy over the difference in methods between these studies, making it unclear which study better captured the relationship between the number of Facebook friends and psychological well-being.

Nabi et al.'s findings also suggest that Facebook usage does not benefit life satisfaction, and they acknowledge that this is a result also reported by the findings of past studies (2013). Their study shows that it is purely the number of friends one has over Facebook that is associated with benefits to one's well-being, and that no other component of Facebook usage is correlated with improved well-being. They believe that the positive relationship between Facebook friends and one's well-being comes from users thinking that the greater number of friends one has on Facebook, the more connected one finds oneself to be. This ultimately does not provide strong evidence for significant benefits from Facebook use.

Moreover, there are several major limitations to this study overall also. One is that it is completely reliant on self-report, which is always susceptible to reporting errors. Another is the fact that it looks at such an arbitrary component of social media engagement, and one that has

benefits based on a heuristic people have told themselves. Also, the benefits could be indirect. There are a lot of reasons why some people have a lot of friends on Facebook. The more things you are involved in, and the slightly older you get, the more people you've become acquaintances with. It could be, for example, that the reason those with more Facebook friends are experiencing less stress, and therefore increased physical health and therefore psychological health, is actually do to the fact that they are people who are involved in more activities where they are meeting more people that they could then "friend" on Facebook. If they are active people, then maybe they're just healthier and it is the activities they are engaged in that decreases stress and improves health. This study's reported benefits of Facebook also literally stops at the number of friends one has, and in all other regards seems to acknowledge that Facebook usage itself is not at all associated with benefits to one's well-being. The study did not even show that Facebook produced connectedness, but rather that an increased appearance of social support (via the number of online friends one has) is correlated with decreased stress, and increased well-being. A person with a greater number of Facebook friends, however, does not result in having greater well-being than a person with more real-life friends who they actually interact with. This is because the people we actually interact with face-to-face satisfy our innate need for relatedness and positive social interactions.

A systematic review of the effect of social networking sites on depression and anxiety had a few reported benefits as well (Seabrook, Kern, and Rickard, 2016). This review examined almost 150 other studies, and recorded several varying observations. The positive results they found included benefits relating to mental health for those who had positive social interactions, support, or connectedness on various social networking sites. These positive experiences tended to be associated with decreased levels of anxiety and depression. However, the reverse also

appeared to occur. Those who had negative interactions and experiences on social networking sites experienced increased levels of anxiety and depression. There were reported positives from overall examination of these studies, but it seems the conclusion was that while there is a correlation between SNS and mental illness, the correlation being positive or negative can vary and depends to some degree on the quality of interactions had over these sites. Whether or not the individual using SNS already suffers from depression or anxiety also influenced the reported quality of interactions, often attributing to the reported negative experiences. Also observed was those with social anxiety may be overcompensating for their inability to connect comfortably with others, expressed through excessive revealing of personal information (mood, current engagements, or very personal thoughts) on SNS. Seabrook et al. thinks that there is potential for social networking sites to have a positive impact on mental health, as well as for mental health issues to be spotted by observing SNS usage (2016).

What suggestions like the findings from this review show is that there is a positive side to what social media can do, as well as provide, for people. It also highlights that one person can be having a great experience on a social media platform, such as Facebook, while another person on the exact same site can be having a terrible experience. Social media could both be beneficial to one's anxiety or depression, or detrimental. It sheds light on the importance of further studying these sites, their design, and the differing motives and means of usage that people have when engaging with them. I think that this is important and can be part of the solution to our issue of the threatened Good Life. It shows that websites, apps, and in particular social networking sites, have a positive side that should be utilized, and that a person's dispositional state of anxiety/depression plays a role in how they interpret their exchanges via SNS.

It also leads to further questioning such as what can be done about addressing the way these sites are marketed? Can they be designed differently so that they are less addicting or less facilitating of anxiety provoking triggers? Should people be aware of the side effects of signing onto social networks, and should we encourage a culture dependent upon them? If there are certain people more negatively triggered by engagement with social media, should there be more awareness about the signs that social media is becoming unhealthy for you or what to do if social media has become unhealthy for you? These are the kinds of questions that arise when one looks at the overall experiences that are reported/studied about SNS and the influence these sites can have on anxiety, depression, and overall well-being. This leads to the next portion of my discussion: how can we change our approach to our modern day tech-based society and prevent it from thwarting our ability to live a fulfilling?

V. What We Can Do to Improve Our Lives in a Time of Technology

My research provided me with not only an array of information supporting my thesis, but also an array of suggestions for how to address some of these issues relating to our often-unhealthy relationship with screens and social media. For example, Forbes' article on Internet addiction included a brief section of suggestions for combating this disorder. While Internet disorder is not yet in the DSM-5, the fact that online gaming addiction is suggests that Internet addiction is not far behind. The way that someone would address this behavioral addiction is tricky because unlike a substance abuse issue, one cannot quit the substance of the Internet in this day and age. Walton mentions cognitive behavioral therapy as a method beginning to be used, specifically with reference to a study conducted in Shanghai where a group of adolescents with internet addiction experienced significant benefits from a multimodal school-based group

CBT (Walton, 2012; Du, Jiang, Vance, 2010). Cognitive behavioral therapy works at addressing both the maladaptive thoughts and behaviors and teaching an individual how to implement healthier ones. It's particularly useful for those with anxiety and depression disorders, as well as addictions (Walton, 2012). So for those with an extreme, and genuine *addiction*, a form of CBT may be a good place to start. There are other ways of addressing the issue of our engagement with these sites and devices though, especially because not everyone's negative experience with these devices and sites is genuine addiction.

Schwartz, in his article detailing his own degree of addiction to distraction, described how he was able to completely detox from the components of this distractive culture that he was struggling with: mainly email and the Internet itself. However, that experience was only manageable while he was away on vacation and allowed to be disconnected from work and other obligations. When he returned to work, he knew he would have to work to find a better balance for himself than what he was engaging in before. And that's what he did. Once aware of the issue, and after having the time to detox and return to his optimal mental state, he knew being on top of things was what was important, and he consistently works to plan out when he's going to check email or do something online; and, before bed, he makes a list of priorities for himself of what he wants to accomplish most the next morning. He now asks himself when beginning to become distracted by various Internet sites and emails: "What do I really want to be doing now? What would be more relaxing, satisfying, productive?" He also has set periods of the day where he remains "disconnected" - such as when he is working on things that require his full attention, at meals, and before going to bed. Turkle gave similar advice about getting away from technology.

At the end of her interview, Turkle was asked if she had any strategies for getting away from technology and “nurturing real-life relationships”; she suggested a few. One was to never allow any technology during meals. That means no cell-phones at the breakfast, lunch, or dinner table. Another was not to have technology (such as phones, tablets, or laptops) involved when spending time with friends and family. This way, when you are spending time with the people you love, you’re not also checking your phone every five minutes, or scrolling on any social media site. Her final strategy was no technology when alone in nature. When she goes for walks, she does not have her phone, a tablet, or so on, on her. She thinks it’s important that we don’t lose touch with our physical surroundings and the restorative nature of being outside and being aware of our surroundings (2011). This last note aligns with the most important thing we can do to restore our well-being and improve our lives in this time of technology: be mindful. Being mindful means being aware of the present moment, which would include being aware of one’s surroundings. Harris, whose life work revolves around computer design and understanding the nature of our technological culture, also deeply believes in the importance of disconnecting, and being mindful.

Bosker’s piece on Harris (2016) begins with Harris at a nightlong digital detox, called Unplug-SF. No mobile devices, or talking about work, or clocks. Everyone there only has the option of talking to those around them, and engaging in activities/conversations that don’t involve digital distractions. Attending events like this is important to Harris, and he considers it time well spent. Bosker’s article makes it clear that being present and focused on the moment is important to Harris. He even wears a bracelet with a silver pendant that reads “presence.” Bosker notes that Harris himself uses many tactics to minimize the distraction of these devices, such as turning off notifications, moving apps that don’t have one singular “in and out” purpose to the

second screen of his phone, and having as the lock-screen of his phone a picture of a scrabble board with the words “face down” so as to remind himself of how his phone should be if it’s out (2016). He even apparently has a post-it note on his laptop that says “do not open without intention” (2016). That is a tactic I have personally adopted for myself, and on the wall next to my bed is a post-it telling me not to check Snapchat unless I receive a notification, and not to check Instagram unless posting something (I can say from experience that following this is not always easy). These tactics are also encouraged on his Time Well Spent website, a site designed to inform people about how the tech industry has been manipulating users, and how as members of the tech industry they want to change this. The goal for Harris seems to be finding ways to encourage the rest of the big-time tech industry (Google, Apple, Facebook, etc.) to think about and change the way they design their devices/apps, because they are addictive, and they are so purposefully. The tech industry is hijacking our minds and ability to be present by constantly urging us to be checking and scrolling. Harris believes that these devices and apps don’t have to be this way, and the fact that they are as controlling of our time and energy as they are is a design flaw (Bosker, 2016). This suggests a further step that can be taken in how to fight back against this tech issue: change the way the technology is designed.

Changing the design of the manipulative and addictive technology involves conscious awareness on the part of the designers. For this reason, this is a change that may not happen soon (if ever) because it would encourage users to use these apps/devices less. If they don’t have the addictive draw, there’s a risk that users will stop feeling the need to have them; a risk that the tech industry is probably not willing to take. However, there is a flip side, which is that the technology could be designed with better intentions and motivations. An example of this is a game called Tenacity. In an article published by the Independent, “Driven to Distraction: Have

We Lost Our Ability to Focus on a Single Task,” Tenacity is mentioned as an antidote to the negative cognitive developments that arise from the game industry and its own addictive/distracting nature (Bland, 2013). Tenacity is a game designed to improve focus and cognitive control, where more time spent playing results in enhanced focus and cognition (2013). This begs the question: does a game like this not become addictive? It seems to encourage increased time spent on it, so if a player is using this game more and more, how much time is spent focusing and using one’s cognitive control on other tasks? Regardless, it is still important for technological advancements like this to be encouraged rather than the alternative. And it would be ideal if the tech industry would relinquish their control over its millions of users. That is probably wishful thinking however, so in the meantime it is best to focus on our awareness of the issue, and steps we can personally take to minimize the effect these devices/apps have over our time, energy, and ultimately our well-being.

VI. Conclusion

Eudaimonic well-being means more than pleasure obtainment/pain avoidance; it’s focused on fully functioning, and flourishing. To fully-function, one needs to satisfy her innate psychological needs. These needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. I argued that a necessary component for satisfying our innate needs of autonomy and competence is mindfulness. Mindfulness is a mental state, which supports acceptance, awareness, and focus. Increased mindfulness, obtained via mindfulness practices, is associated with decreased rumination, anxiety, depression, stress; and increased attention, memory, and other cognitive benefits. The benefits of this mental state on one’s cognition and psychological state are important because they show how much better one functions when one is mindful. If a person is

having a hard time engaging in the behaviors necessary for satisfying autonomy and competence, then practicing mindfulness training should help because not being able to be mindful could be the core of the problem.

The reason that I argue it is a necessary component for satisfying our innate needs is that it is in a mindful and aware state of mind that one is the most engaged and focused, and acting without judgment. I believe this is the mental state one needs to have at least a semi-significant amount of time in order to be able to act autonomously; it is the mental state one needs to have to become competent; and it is also the mental state one needs to have when having social interactions with others in order to satisfy one's need for relatedness (although the issue with relatedness has more to do with the way we've learned to turn to online socializing). If one is going to act autonomously, one should be acting in accord with one's values, beliefs, and interests. Take a moment and think about what this would be like if one lived in a constant state of distraction and was never fully present when engaging in things. Imagine the cases we looked at in this paper where the addiction to distraction robbed people of their autonomy. They were addicted to the opposite of mindfulness. Being constantly pulled to check one's smart phone for a notification, getting swept up in a series of website searches, or finding thirty minutes has gone by after checking Facebook because one has ended up scrolling one's newsfeed, takes away from the work a person can get done. When working, creating a project, and completing tasks, a person needs to be in a mindful, focused state, so that the work produced is one's best. Mindfulness is crucial to satisfying these needs.

However, mindfulness on its own is a positive mental state. It not only facilitates positive engagement in experiences that our psychological health needs, but it is also important for not living a life constantly looking forward or backward, and where current experiences are given

one's full attention. This relates back to Besser's work as well. While this is not included in Eudaimonic Ethics, I've had the pleasure of hearing Besser give a lecture on happiness and what we need to do to be happy. She calls them the five keys to happiness. One of these "keys" is making a decision and moving on. It does no good to anyone to make a decision and then ruminate over whether or not it was the right choice, or what could have been done. Mindfulness is supportive of this. When in a state of pure mindfulness, one is both aware of the current moment and accepting of it. As the discussed studies demonstrated, those who practice mindfulness trainings have higher levels of acceptance, which is beneficial for being able to accept the decisions one makes.

Excessive engagement with some forms of technology is one route away from mindfulness and is leading to addiction to distraction, as well as a disengagement from necessary social interactions. If one wants to live a fulfilling life in a time where this engagement with social media, cellphones, and laptops is encouraged, then one needs to be aware of the negative side effects of this culture. Being aware of research and studies on the issues of social media engagement, as well as a growing addiction to distraction, should give you pause for concern. A world with constant connection to a screen or an online social interaction is not the only option, nor is it the healthiest. We function more productively and in a relaxed state when we are less attached to these technological devices and realms, so consciously making an effort to decrease time spent with our phones and computers is actually important.

Since we know that mindfulness is a very beneficial trait/state to obtain, and a necessary state for satisfying our innate psychological needs, practicing mindfulness meditation or another variation of mindfulness training is something we should all aim to include as part of our routine. A combination of increased mindfulness and active separation from our technological devices

can greatly enhance our ability to live a fulfilling life. I also speculate that being mindful also allows one live a meaningful life, because one can more fully engage in projects and relationships that give meaning to one's life.

An interesting thought to keep in mind when thinking of how to live a fulfilling life is to consider Susan Wolf's ideas on meaningfulness. Wolf discusses what it means to live a fulfilling or meaningful life and presents the idea of the fitting-fulfillment view (2012). According to this view, one needs to be involved in activities that are both personally interesting and that one has a passion for, but that are also objectively worthwhile in that they contribute to something bigger than oneself. So, it needs to be fitting to who a person is, and also fulfilling in the sense that it is objectively deserving of meaning. This idea of meaning fits well with the *eudaimonia*, which regardless of whose theory one looks at, encourages flourishing and ultimately living well and fully functioning. This can be useful in considering how to combat the issues facing our ability to live a fulfilling life if we also keep in mind what we should be focusing our time and energy on, which would be objectively meaningful projects that suit one's skills and passions, but also contribute to something bigger than oneself.

The issue that exists with our relationship with certain devices and social media is one that also extends past the arguments I've made in this paper. For example, I claimed that it is the threat to mindfulness that attacks our ability to be autonomous and competent. Yet there is another issue with a specific component of technology that threatens our autonomy. This is an issue with social media in particular. Social media, as I mentioned, is by design addictive. It's addictive because it is designed to trigger some of our most rooted human needs, like the need for relatedness. However, in doing so, it creates a need for more and more attention on these sites. The culture of "likes" is problematic to autonomy in its own way. It is not only addictive

and distracting, but it is also making us willing to change our behavior so as to align with what everyone else is doing and that our peers generally perceive to be worthy of a “like.” This is just one of many potential issues that stem from the same issue that this project touched on, and that could constitute an entire paper on their own. I also think the involvement of social media in our face-to-face social interactions is threatening to our relatedness, a view that I also did not get into in this paper.

In conclusion, a good life is one where we have well-being. We achieve well-being by satisfying our innate psychological needs. These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Our relationship with various devices and apps is addictive and destructive to our ability to be mindful. The destruction of our ability to be mindful is detrimental to our ability to continuously be autonomous and competent individuals. Various studies on the benefits of mindfulness were discussed, which demonstrate how mental health, cognition, and attention changes when one practices being mindful. The more mindful one is, the more frequently one will engage in the necessary behaviors for satisfying our needs, and the more one will experience well-being and a good life. The other issue with our relationship to those forms of technology is that it takes away from our ability to genuinely interact with and relate to others, diminishing the quality of our social interactions. This is detrimental to our ability to satisfy our need for relatedness. We need to find ways to be aware of this issue revolving around technology, and to consciously try and disconnect when working on tasks, and when spending time with people. The key to a good life is being as present as possible, which may not be achievable all the time, but if we allow ourselves the space to disconnect and just be present, we will engage more in activities that we endorse and identify with, complete better work thus making us feel more competent, and will engage in real and genuine relationships and social interactions. Keeping in

mind the kind of activities we engage in, such as objectively meaningful projects/work that contribute to something greater than oneself, can also be important in living a fulfilling life.

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