

CHASING

~~LIKES~~

~~TRENDS~~

~~VALIDATION~~

~~RECOGNITION~~

SILENCE

ESCAPE THE CROWD
OWN YOUR AUTHENTICITY



KAPIL PANKHANIA

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PREFACE

As a millennial, I've had a front-row seat to the rise of social media in the mid-to-late 2000s, right alongside the rapid refinement of digital technology. This combined force opened new avenues to access information, shape our online identity, and blur the line between perception and reality. Reconnecting with old friends was seamless. If you knew their full name, there was a 99% of landing on their social media profile within seconds. This was the original promise of social media: to bring us back together and share life updates and photos. However, what started as simplicity, soon revealed itself as the doorway to something much heavier.

I began to notice what were once subtle changes starting to evolve into major cultural shifts. Exchanging likes and comments on a screen had begun paving a new path for connection, replacing the simplicity of face-to-face interaction. With this new wave of communication sweeping across the globe, the volume and speed of information have become overwhelming—news articles, social updates, and the latest trends—robbing our attention more than ever before. News feeds peppered with highlight reels sending the notion that who we are today will never be good enough, as the goalposts for happiness and success keep moving further down the field.

What seemed like an unsolicited treasure to connect with our peers in effortless ways has grown to become a hammering noise, year after year, one app then another, and it doesn't seem that the noise will be dialled down anytime

soon. Observing the digital era unfold from my front-row seat has been a rollercoaster of emotions. Excitement became exhaustion. Shiny gadgets became mere distractions. Being connected led to discontentment. For the first time, I felt truly lost. The daily feed of other people's successes distorted my perception of what happiness looks like. The unrelenting number of daily notifications distracted me from spending quality time with friends and family. Chasing goals only to meet society's expectations led to questioning my morals and values.

It was only when I began writing daily at my bedroom desk that I noticed how this newly connected world was impacting me. Putting pen to paper in a device-free zone helped me channel my thoughts and become increasingly aware of how my life had begun to revolve around my phone, laptop, and tablet. As I unloaded one thought after the next, two key realisations came to my mind: *I don't like feeling this way*, and *I will find a way through this*. Ultimately, I wanted to fight this noise and reclaim my peace and purpose in this world.

Throwing away my devices was never going to be the answer. But rather, it was a matter of adapting to this new generation of technology and communication. After all, this digital era is here to stay, and I needed to learn how to best conduct my life around it or risk being left behind. The *noise* from today's fast flow of information and the value of *silence* with my diary open in front of me had become two opposing forces. Through experimentation and curiosity, I've uncovered my formula where silence triumphs over noise, and regain control of what matters most to me. Now I want to share that formula with you—the core ingredients to optimise daily life with practical tips, key lessons, and a hopeful nudge so you can thrive in today's digital world.

THE NOISE

Eyes open steadily.

One hand reaches out for the phone.

It lights up as a swipe unlocks the screen.

The world's newsfeed walks the red carpet.

The first post is of a friend leaning on a balcony rail at sunset, holding a glass of wine. The caption reads: “*Work hard, play harder. #VacationMode.*” Reading the post whilst curled up in a cosy blanket now makes the skin crawl. A double-tap to the screen, anyway.

Swipe.

A video auto-plays. A morning routine featuring a jog in the park, a cup of coffee, and a checked-off to-do list. The caption says: “*5 a.m. club: the early bird catches the worm*”. A sharp pain of guilt settles in.

Scroll.

A photo appears. A gym selfie with glistening abs whilst holding a protein shake. It's labelled with “*No excuses*”. A feeling of jealousy builds as the jaw tightens.

Scroll again.

A clip of a young entrepreneur sitting at a minimalist desk, closing deals over Zoom. The overlay says: “Made £10k this week. What’s your excuse?” Save the video, though it feels like a taunt.

Another swipe of the thumb.

Suddenly, the thought of a specific person unexpectedly crosses the mind. The search bar is tapped, and a name is typed with growing tension. The profile loads instantly. The first post shows them holding keys to a brand-new car. “*#Sweat #Sacrifice #Success*”. Swipe. The next photo shows golden sand, blue waves, and a wide grin. No caption this time, but the beach snap says plenty.

The scrolling begins to slow. The heart thumping harder in the chest. Every post is a constant reminder of what’s lacking. And there it goes again—the noise. *That* noise. The hate machine is in full operation.

A deep breath.

Maybe just a few more posts?

Another success story. Another distraction. Another dull sensation.

It’s all a little too much.

The noise is growing louder, soaking up every other sensation in the moment.

Then, the screen goes black. A reflection in the glass is hard to meet. The eyes lift from the phone to a room that feels colder than before. The phone is set down, and the ache of wasted time is heavier than the silence. Reality creeps into the mind.

Another roller-coaster day of emotions lies ahead.

Frustration. Guilt. Loneliness. Anxiousness. The list could go on.

Take your pick.

This was just a typical morning for me. At the moment of waking each day, I was warped into a story where I was a spectator from the sidelines, rather than being the main character in the real world. If it weren't my newsfeed that took me into a digital dimension, it would be the following notification that appeared across the top of my phone screen. A chime. A ping. A buzz. From here, I was just a single tap away from being taken to the latest headlines. The temptation was too hard to resist. Breaking news dominated my attention. Another hideous crime committed, another promise broken by a political leader, or another celebrity scandal sweeping across the nation. The constant exposure to current affairs took a significant toll on me, swinging between feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed. Conversely, I didn't want to be the one person who isn't keeping up with the news, especially if it's a primary topic discussed at home, in the office, or social settings. No matter how I felt about it, there was no way out.

A buzz in the palm of my hand again. This time, a notification from the office. It would often be a new report due with an impossible deadline, or a colleague wanting my attention. Then another buzz before I can read through the remainder of my inbox—it's a reminder to organise a catch-up with a school friend. Whether it was a social media snap, a breaking news story, a work demand, or keeping up with relationships, juggling endless streams of information from the digital world became utterly exhausting. Each morning, with my face buried

in the screen, was just a preview of what awaited me as the rest of the day unfolded. A long stream of notifications would continue at the breakfast table, during the commute to work, at my desk when I had a spare moment, whilst I was in the company of friends and family, and finally when my head hit the pillow at night. I would feel incomplete without the device. The thought of not having the phone by my side would make me feel uneasy—every post, every message, and every thread. I *had* to know about it.

The void of shared experiences

Over time, the world I saw before me and the world I saw on my screen began to form a similar picture. At this stage, I noticed a terrifying disconnection from the physical world I once knew. Amongst the numerous changes, it was my relationships that took the biggest tumble. There was a time when catching up with a friend involved speaking face-to-face within the same four walls, whether in a house, a café, or a restaurant. I missed uncovering mysteries in those catch-ups, from their exciting experiences during trips abroad to interesting projects that had kept them busy on weekends. However, it now took just a few clicks and swipes to find those answers without breaking a sweat. Whilst this seemed like a convenience at the time, upon reflection, it was leading me down a path of fewer genuine relationships and a growing sense of loneliness.

It wasn't just the dialogue between two people that was lacking; I also missed being mindful of the atmosphere around me during each interaction. The hum of overlapping conversations, the creak of a chair pulled away from a table,

the clatter of cups, and the hiss of espresso machines. The human connection also lost its place. Without exchanging words, emotions, and subtle social cues within the same physical environment—something we've all learnt to develop and notice from countless social exchanges during adolescence—the depth and meaning of those relationships began to crumble. Suddenly, engaging with others in a vibrant setting was replaced with tapping at a phone screen whilst in a room filled with silence. After all, this seemed like the new normality of connecting with people. What was once a back-and-forth conversation between two people had transpired into a single act of checking out their latest photo or life update on the palm of a hand.

A hammer blow to my wellbeing

The transition from existing purely in the physical world to being part of a digital society had a ripple effect on vast areas of my life. The time I spent in the presence of others had dramatically declined, and I spent more time indoors, resulting in a lack of exercise and a less healthy diet. But it didn't end there—I suffered from an inconsistent sleeping pattern, which led to my energy levels tanking, and my motivation to do the simplest of tasks had diminished. From one red flag to another, I was stitching together a version of myself with which I had no familiarity. It was like being introduced to a stranger who was out to take every sense of my well-being.

My general mood took a turn for the worse. I remember being someone who found pleasure in adventures, embraced challenging projects that

skyrocketed my creativity, and had a curious mind that never stopped asking questions about the world. What's more, I appreciated being surrounded by those who would share our most thrilling moments and show their encouragement during my darkest hour. This was the person I once knew. It was my identity. The emergence of the digital era marked the beginning of a new way of conducting everyday life, as it did for many of you.

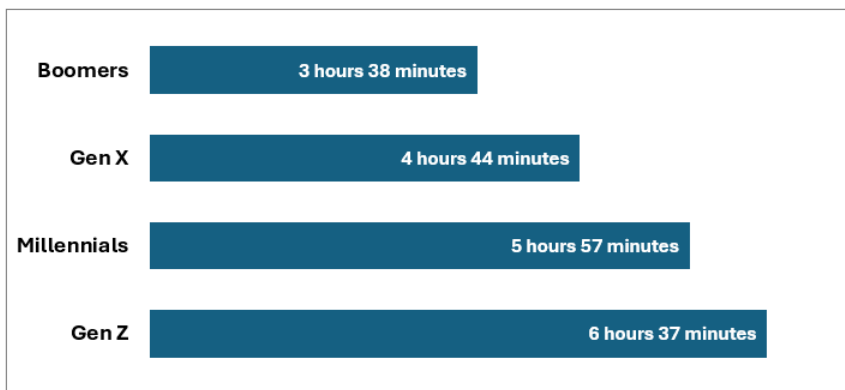
At the outset, I viewed the latest wave of technology with astonishment—a new way to interact using cutting-edge devices, obtain information in seconds, and communicate with people from all corners of our planet. However, it wasn't long after taking a step back that I noticed a shift in my emotions. The decline in physical interactions led to a path of unexpected solitude. With the unceasing flow of emails and messages triggering my notification alerts, separating my personal life from my professional one was incredibly challenging. The drip-feeding of one breaking headline after another painted an illusion that the world has become dysfunctional, and everything that seemed optimistic is now a thing of the past.

The daily success stories from close friends and celebrities on social media were constant reinforcements that I wouldn't achieve anything worthwhile in my life. It was this 'comparison culture' that eroded my self-esteem. It seemed like everyone was winning at life, except *me*. If it weren't a colleague's job promotion that made me feel bitter, it would be a family member's flashy new sports car that would do the trick. If it weren't a selfie taken by a close friend on a beach holiday that made my stomach churn, it would be a motivational post that made me feel inadequate for not living up to an idealised standard. I came to realise that other

people’s successes shifted *my* priorities to meet *their* expectations. Does this sound familiar? If so, you’re not alone.

It’s noisy for *all* generations

In today’s world, the amount of time spent on these devices continues to rise across all generations. We have become increasingly reliant on technology for communication, accessing information, working remotely, and enhancing productivity. The following chart illustrates the average amount of time spent daily using technology across these generations:



Average number of hours spent on smartphone devices. Source: iQmetrix¹

It’s clear from the data that interacting with a smartphone consumes a relatively large portion of the day. Unsurprisingly, the most recent generations consume more hours on these devices on any given day.

¹ iQmetrix, ‘Generational Differences in Smartphone Use’ (2023)

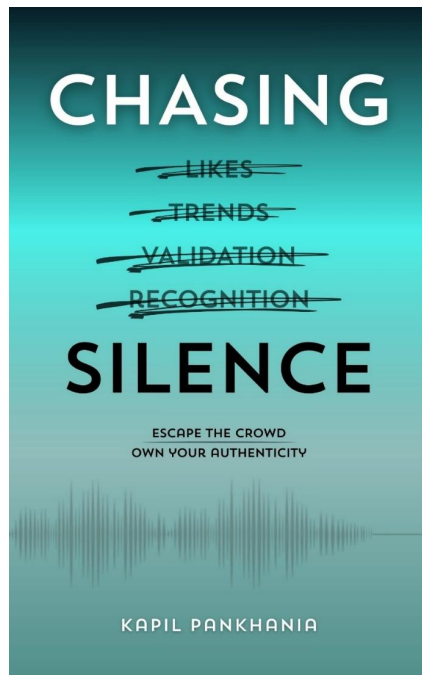
- Millennials (those born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s) and Gen Z (those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s) both spend approximately a staggering **25% (6 hours)** of their time on their smartphone devices each day.
- That is equivalent to **1.8 days per week** or **7.5 days per month**.
- Assuming 8 out of 24 hours are spent sleeping, around **40% (6 hours)** of their time *awake* is spent looking at a screen.
- On the other hand, Boomers (those born between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s), although not showing as severe a picture as other generations, are fundamentally spending a large proportion of their time using a smart device.

The clear conclusion to draw from this data is that Gen Z is the most addicted to their smartphones. However, this shouldn't discount the impact it also has on other generations. According to a survey from SimpleTexting², more than half (**51.6%**) of Boomers are on their smartphones more than they'd like each day, compared to more than three-quarters (**76.3%**) of Gen Z.

Not only are we spending an incredible amount of time tapping away at our phones, but we're also aware that this problem needs to be reduced to keep us sane and more present in modern society. I'd gone through the motions of feeling withdrawn from people and places. Self-realisation soon played a crucial role in determining how much time I spent on my phone each day. In retrospect, the cold, harsh truth was that the phone I owned was the very thing that was

² SimpleTexting, 'Screen Time Trends in the Age of Covid-19' (2021)

owning *me*. I unintentionally discovered ways to replace valuable offline experiences that would otherwise bring me true joy and a sense of belonging. Being neck-deep in the digital space, I couldn't find the necessary answers to pull me free again. I wasn't entirely convinced there was an answer to run toward, and that this was the new way of living. But I didn't give up that easily. In a time of desperation, I turned to creating my *own* solution to the problem, and I want to share that journey with you.



Full version available for purchase in October 2025.

What else you can expect:

*How to build a **healthier**, more **mindful relationship** with your phone*

*The challenges of **comparison culture** and how you can overcome them*

*How to uncover your **core values** and set meaningful **goals***

*Why endless scrolling leaves us lonelier, and how to **reclaim authentic human connection***

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