



Family
Online Safety
Institute

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Panel Summary: Mind Over Matter: The Psychological Impact of Digital Media

Moderator: Michael Rich, Center on Media and Child Health, Harvard University

Panelists: Reynol Junco, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University; Simon Moore, Innovationbubble.eu; Alejandro Nagy, International Psychoanalytical Association; Saul Rosenthal, Digital Media Health

The main topic of discussion for the Mind Over Matter: the Psychological Impact of Digital Media was the psychological effects of Social Media, as well as the harms and benefits of digital media on development.

Michael Rich started off by emphasizing that social media can be a great tool for both learning and social interaction, but only if devices are used to their full potential. Reynol Junco agreed with Michael Rich, and discussed how social media can promote social interaction and influence social interactions in a positive way.

Alejandro Nagy discussed the globalization effects of social media, and how it allows teenagers to explore their “purpose” in life, and how it lets people know about their existence. He also reflected on the fact that he is starting to use the Internet to treat his patients over video chat, and how it allows him to reach people in more remote locations.

Simon Moore asked the question: How do emotions drive us through the Internet? He brought up the power of vision, and how this leads to emotional attachment, and how there is an unconscious aspect of how we interact with digital media. He also raised the point of whether our emotions in the digital world are the same in the real world.

Saul Rosenthal concentrated on the word “addiction,” and whether Internet addiction really exists. He expressed the belief that internet addiction itself is not a condition, and that there is a difference between addiction and compulsive behavior and doing something too much. He further went on to say that most people who are diagnosed with Internet addiction already have other underlying conditions or situations that would lead them to spend more time online. He stated that, “a kid spends time online out of fear of losing friends and being unable to socialize face to face.” The rest of the panelists agreed with Saul’s viewpoint on Internet addiction.

At one point, Michael Rich and Reynol Junco got into a debate around whether interactive media is changing the brain development of children. Michael Rich believes that there are developmental

changes happening due to media use, while Reynol cited the lack of studies and evidence of physiological brain change due to excessive online activity.