

Skills:

Can understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.

Adults

Group



1 Read the dialogue. Discuss the following questions in pairs. Share your answers to the last question with the rest of the group.

- ? In what way does Sean highlight the generational difference in handling multiple tasks simultaneously?
- ? How do Sean and Jack feel about the demands of modern life and constant multitasking?
- ? Do you think technology has made it harder for people to focus on one task at a time?
- ? What do you think contributes to the feeling of always needing to be busy and productive?

Sean: Hey, Jack. Busy lately?

Jack: Yeah, man. Crazy busy. What about you?

Sean: Ugh, don't even get me started. I have so much on my plate that I feel like I never really finish anything. Just jumping from one thing to another. And then I realize it's already 6 pm and I haven't eaten yet.

Jack: Oh trust me, same here. I actually have lunch meetings every day this week. Can't even take a break to eat.

Sean: It's insane how we're expected to multitask all the time. Like eating while working or responding to emails while watching TV. We can't even have a peaceful meal without doing something else at the same time.

Jack: Exactly. The other day, I was having dinner with my family and caught myself checking work emails under the table. They must have thought I was texting someone!

Sean: Haha, I know what you mean. My kids can be talking to me, watching a video on TikTok, doing their homework, and texting their friends at the same time.

Jack: That's crazy! My brain would blow up already. I don't know how to survive with this pace of life.

Sean: Me neither.

2 Based on the prompts, brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of multitasking.

Advantages:

1. Helps save _____.
2. Increases _____.
3. Allows _____.
4. Enables _____.
5. Enhances _____.

Disadvantages:

1. Leads to _____.
2. Can result in _____.
3. Causes higher _____.
4. Hinders effective _____.
5. May reduce overall _____.

3 Read the article and define the words in bold based on the context. Check your guesses in the glossary (Page 4).

'Urgency culture' might lead you to burnout. How can you combat it?

In an increasingly fast-paced and **hyperconnected world** that rewards **immediacy**, urgency culture **blurs the line** between what is truly important and what is not.

At work, this could involve handling frequent last-minute requests, unrealistic deadlines or workload, and the expectation to be reachable even after hours.

In personal life, **manifestations** of urgency culture include overextending in relationships, frequently checking social media updates out of fear of missing out, and responding immediately to calls and texts, even when it's inconvenient.

The constant rush and the unspoken expectation to always be "on" professionally and personally can create a state of **heightened alertness**. This hypervigilance significantly increases stress and anxiety, says Joel Frank, a Los Angeles-based clinical psychologist and owner of Duality Psychological Services.

According to the American Psychological Association's Stress in America 2023 report, nearly a quarter of adults report feeling high levels of stress post-pandemic, marking a 19 percent increase since 2019. Younger adults are hit worse, with almost half of Gen Z and more than a third of **millennials** reporting feeling anxious or stressed all or most of the time.

"Anxiety, in turn, feeds into the urgency, creating a cycle where each **reinforces** the other," Frank says.

The ripple effects of being 'always on'

Being part of the "always on" culture often necessitates multitasking. However, research shows the human brain lacks the neurocognitive architecture to perform two or more tasks **simultaneously**. So, every time we multitask, it actually slows the brain down and may reduce productivity by up to 40 percent.

Besides, "the attraction to distraction that drives most multitasking can be hard to shut off," says Friederike Fabritius, neuroscientist and author of The Brain-Friendly Workplace. "As a result, you may find it difficult to focus even when you aren't multitasking."

Meanwhile, constant **overstimulation** — a significant contributor to urgency culture — **desensitizes** your dopamine system. In short, the more overstimulated you are, the less joy you can feel, says Fabritius.

It also impedes reflective thinking. When the brain is overwhelmed by the constant need to process information and make decisions quickly, it often resorts to shallow thinking. This compromises your ability to engage in deep work, which requires long bouts of distraction-free concentration, says Frank.

Over time, urgency culture can also be **detrimental** to physical health. A false sense of urgency **tricks** the body into reacting as if it's in a threatening situation, activating the "fight-or-flight" response. Your breathing becomes faster, your blood pressure and heart rate go up, and you lose the ability to regulate emotions, says David Rabin, a neuroscientist and cofounder of the San Francisco-based health tech company Apollo Neuro.

According to Rabin, an overactive fight-or-flight response contributes to hypertension, sleep deprivation, high cholesterol, and inflammatory disorders.

4 Choose the correct answer to each question about the article.

1. The passage posits that the constant state of heightened alertness induced by urgency culture can have what primary effect on individuals?

- a) It enhances problem-solving abilities.
- b) It fosters a sense of resilience and adaptability.
- c) It significantly increases stress and anxiety.
- d) It cultivates a greater appreciation for work-life balance.

2. The passage suggests that the desensitization of the dopamine system due to constant overstimulation can lead to what specific outcome?

- a) Increased motivation and productivity
- b) Decreased ability to experience joy
- c) Improved emotional regulation
- d) Enhanced creative problem-solving

3. In the context of the passage, the term "reflective thinking" is most closely associated with which cognitive process?

- a) Rapid decision-making
- b) Shallow, reactive responses
- c) Deep, distraction-free concentration
- d) Efficient multitasking

4. The passage cites data from the American Psychological Association to indicate that which age group has been disproportionately affected by increased stress and anxiety in the post-pandemic period?

- a) Retirees
- b) Middle-aged adults
- c) Younger adults (Gen Z and millennials)
- d) All age groups have been equally impacted

5. Which of the following best summarizes the primary argument made in the passage regarding the effects of urgency culture?

- a) Urgency culture enhances productivity and promotes work-life balance.
- b) Urgency culture has negligible impacts on individuals' mental and physical well-being.
- c) Urgency culture is a necessary byproduct of the modern, hyperconnected world.
- d) Urgency culture can have detrimental effects on individuals' mental, physical, and professional well-being.

5

Fill in the gaps in the sentences with the words in bold from the article.

1. Virtual reality technology continues _____(1) between the digital and physical worlds.
2. The protest was a _____(2) of the citizens' dissatisfaction with the government.
3. In today's _____(3), information spreads rapidly across the globe.
4. She could _____(4) juggle multiple tasks with ease.
5. Constant exposure to screens can lead to _____(5) for some individuals.
6. Excessive violence in media can _____(6) viewers to real-world suffering.
7. Lack of exercise can have _____(7) effects on one's overall health.
8. Scammers often use elaborate schemes _____(8) unsuspecting victims.
9. The company implemented a new training program _____(9) employees' understanding of cyber security protocols.
10. Many innovations in technology are driven by the needs and preferences of _____(10).
11. The _____(11) of social media allows people to communicate instantly.
12. During times of crisis, people often exhibit _____(12) and awareness.

6

Work in small groups:

- Discuss the possible outcomes of living in a hyperconnected and constantly overstimulating world. What challenges might people face in the future?
- Brainstorm ways to address these challenges. Think about what individuals could do to make their life easier.
- Present your group's ideas to the rest of the class.
- Use the vocabulary from the article (Ex. 3)

GLOSSARY

FOR EXERCISE 3:

to blur the line between - to make distinctions less clear or defined.

to desensitize - to make someone less sensitive or responsive to something, typically through repeated exposure.

detrimental - causing harm or damage.

heightened alertness - an increased state of awareness or readiness.

hyperconnected world - a global society where people and devices are constantly linked through technology.

immediacy - the quality of happening or being available without delay.

manifestation - an event, action, or object that clearly shows or embodies something abstract or theoretical.

millennials - the generation born roughly between 1981 and 1996.

overstimulation - excessive or intense stimulation of the senses or mind.

to reinforce - to strengthen or support something, often by providing additional evidence or arguments.

simultaneously - occurring at the same time.

to trick - to deceive or outwit someone through cunning or deceit.

SOME OTHER WORDS FROM THE ARTICLE:

neuroscientist - a scientist who studies the structure and function of the brain and nervous system.

neurocognitive architecture - the underlying structure and processes of the brain related to cognition and behavior.

dopamine system - the neural pathways and mechanisms in the brain responsible for producing and regulating the neurotransmitter dopamine.

hypervigilance - being overly aware of your surroundings and constantly on the lookout for potential dangers.

Correct answers

1

Made in “Create a Dialogue” + “Open Questions” + “Discussion Questions”.

1. Sean points out that younger generations are adept at handling multiple activities simultaneously, such as talking, watching videos, doing homework, and texting all at once.
2. Both Sean and Jack share a sentiment of struggling to keep up with the demands of modern life and the expectation to multitask in various situations.

2

Made in the “Advantages and Disadvantages” tool.

3

The glossary is made in “Word-Definition Matching” tool.

4

Made in “ABCD Questions”.

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. c
5. d

5

Made in “Sentences with Target Vocabulary” + “Fill in the Gaps”

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. to blur the line | 7. detrimental |
| 2. manifestation | 8. to trick |
| 3. hyperconnected world | 9. to reinforce |
| 4. simultaneously | 10. millennials |
| 5. overstimulation | 11. immediacy |
| 6. desensitize | 12. heightened alertness |

6

Inspired by the “Lead-in Activities” tool.