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Cultural Critics on Looking & Living

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Chronically Online: The [21st-Century Epidemic](#)⁰

[An illness that can't be treated, studied, or found in the DSM5.](#)

Defining Chronically Online

Albar Al-Heeti, in a CNET article, defines “chronically online” as spending so much time online that it “skews [one’s] sense of reality and hinders [one’s] ability to effectively communicate about topics like politics or social justice because [one lacks] real-world experience.” Urban Dictionary user ‘illweal’ passionately defines chronically online as “Someone who is basically always on the internet and their entire existence revolves around being on the internet. People who are chronically online typically have no real friends IRL, and stay online starting useless debates that literally achieve nothing outside of a screen.” Although a straightforward concept, “chronically online” is a paradoxical one. Its complexity should not be written off as a mere [footnote](#).¹

People who use “chronically online” clearly define a separation between the internet and so-called reality. Another Urban Dictionary user ‘ji707’ defines chronically online as “Someone who is so absorbed into online life and discourse that they become unfamiliar with things off the internet. They may also form opinions/arguments that have no meaning or actual

¹ Throughout the essay, I will be using these footnotes as a meta-commentary on the topics I address in order to imbue them with more nuance. You may also find my own frustrations, interests, hypocrisies, and paradoxes.

importance/depth outside of the internet and [online spaces](#).²” Yet in 2023, there is no clear separation internet and the “real world.” Society is currently in a state where the internet directly impacts the “real world.” Legacy Russel’s *Glitch Feminism* discouraged me from using the term “real world,” opting for the term offline instead. Our offline and online lives are not separate entities, they are different modes of our existence. Russell’s embrace of the offline/online dichotomy as opposed to the online/real-world dichotomy is because she understands that the online world has given previously disenfranchised people more power. The internet has democratized our society in a revolutionary way. Marginalized people have been able to explore and embrace their personhood through the existence of online chatrooms, forums, messageboards, etc. Viewing the internet as “not real” delegitimizes this phenomenon. The term “chronically online” undermines the experiences of marginalized people who have grown more confident, knowledgeable, and powerful through actualizing their identities on the internet. The internet is the real world. [Nothing that happens on the internet exists in a vacuum](#).³ Our online identities are concrete facets of who we truly are, and thus, are inescapable.

The real-world vs. internet dichotomy creates certain false truths that allow people to relinquish responsibility for their actions. People intensely debate “cancel culture” and its implications. Many people feel certain actions are being [unfairly](#)⁴ punished (e.g., racism, the use

² Ji707 views online and offline are two separate spaces. For a moment, if we believed this is true, the immediate counterargument is: it is a problem if these issues *only* exist in online spaces? Would it be wrong for a person to call attention to it? Should online spaces resist rules or guidelines on interactions?

³ Sometimes, I wish the internet was a vacuum. Wouldn’t it be nice for humans to have a place to say and do things with no consequences? Yes and no. Our inherently social nature requires us to answer to each other and ourselves no matter what we do. Perhaps, the idea that we need a place for actions without consequences comes from a society that programs us to be hyper-individualistic.

⁴ Western society is historically horrible with punishment. Punishment is almost never proportional to the crimes committed – either too much or too little – and is very much influenced by societal privilege.

of slurs, and sexual assault). Getting “canceled” often occurs when [things](#)⁵ someone previously posted online resurface. While the [morality of cancel culture](#)⁶ is a separate debate, these debates reveal a commonly held sentiment: [what you do online shouldn’t affect how you are treated offline](#).⁷

Social media’s early days were a lawless wasteland where we could shout into the void without consequence. The act of logging onto your computer was like *The Purge* (2013) where [everything was legal](#)⁸ until you logged off. Personas dominated. The perceived lack of offline consequences encouraged those online to shed their inhibitions and dawn a sense of limitlessness in its place.

Keeping online actions completely contained within online spaces could be reasonable if there were no [offline benefits](#)⁹ to having an online life. But once your internet presence becomes monetized, there are highly tangible offline benefits. When bloggers began receiving sponsorships and YouTube placed ads before and during videos, the space between online and offline narrowed. Fast forward to today where [the internet](#)¹⁰ decides [presidential elections](#)¹¹ and

⁵ (almost always old tweets of people saying slurs or other generally racist, homophobic, or fatphobic bullshit)

⁶ Cancel culture doesn’t exist. And if it does, the people who most deserved to be canceled almost never get canceled. Marginalized people are harshest to other marginalized people because – understandably – they expect more from people who *should* get it. But there are many who get away with it; Chris Brown (still awarded for his music), Jeffree Star (still makes makeup and money), every member of the Kardashians-Jenner clan (continue to be a billion-dollar media-beauty empire)...

⁷ There is so much to be gained from the internet having no influence on the offline world. The majority of 21st century socio-political movements either began online or were influenced and bolstered by the internet. For the people and institutions against these movements and their victories, deligitimizing the internet as a whole deligitimizes these movements – an act that most certainly works in the favor of these people and institutions.

⁸ And people were doing wild ass shit (e.g., the Dark Web)! This lawlessness almost always favored morally abhorrent people such as pedophiles, racists, homophobes, and anti-semites – just to name a few. Meanwhile, I was playing illegally downloaded games and giving the family PC a virus.

⁹ Beyond feelings of enjoyment and indulgence in interests.

¹⁰ By “internet,” I mean Facebook. And by Facebook, I mean Mark Zuckerberg.

¹¹ Mark Zuckerberg had to testify before Congress after Facebook was linked to election fraud and blamed for the January 6th, 2021 insurrection.

causes [genocides](#)^{12,13} — that space might as well not exist. So the question is: if you can be rewarded for your online presence, why can't you and why shouldn't you be punished?

Am I Taking Things Too Far, or Are You Just Being Ableist?

“Chronically online” people are known for “taking things too far.” What exactly do they take too far? That remains unclear. Albar Al-Heeti's CNET article on the “chronically online” phenomenon linked a TikTok video where someone illustrates chronically online behavior by saying that calling something stupid is ableist. Urban Dictionary user ‘illwegal’ gave the example of “she was arguing about the [oppression olympics](#)¹⁴ the other day.” Here's the thing: the majority of people regularly participate in ableist actions. Disability is one of the least understood marginalities despite being widely common. Many terms used to describe a lack of intelligence are rooted in ableism, including “stupid.” Being called out on ableism (or any -ism) is uncomfortable, but ending ableism requires being aware of its omnipresent nature.

¹² Facebook's advertisements and algorithms bolstered rising hate for the Rohingya who were eventually ethnically cleansed in Myanmar. Facebook continued to profit as 700,000 Rohingya (a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority based in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State) fled Rakhine in August 2017 when the Myanmar security forces launched a targeted campaign of widespread and systematic murder, rape and burning of homes.

¹³ Re: Facebook and Genocide. These are very real examples of the harm that the internet has caused. But there is also so much good that the internet has done. As previously mentioned, the internet has been a mass democratizing tool. It has also been a mass tool for leftist radicalization (which I see as a majorly good thing). Cheers to all the movements that began on/were influenced by the internet: The Black Lives Matter Movements of 2016 and 2020, the #MeToo Movement, the 2019 Hong Kong Protests, the Venezuelan election of 2018, the Brazilian Election of 2022, the 2020-2021 Indian Farmer's Protests, the response to striking down Roe v. Wade, End SARS, the 2021-2023 Iranian Protests, Reddit vs. GameStop, and so many more.

¹⁴ “Oppression Olympics” goes hand-in-hand with being “chronically online.” It is a direct criticism of intersectionality because it pokes fun at people with multiple marginalities qualifying their authority in certain discourses by citing their multiple marginalities. Now, there is some merit to the term. Should people be collecting marginalities to see who has it worse? Conditionally, yes. The condition being at any given point in time, all marginalized people are suffering in some way. However, there are critical moments in which one group needs more attention. For example, during the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, Black people needed support from their non-black counterparts. During the 2020-2021 wave of hate crimes against East Asian people, East Asian people needed support from non-East Asian people. Yet during both times, there were people who were not members of those respective groups who wanted to minimize the attention given to both by citing their own oppression.

But if regularly calling unacceptable things “ableist” is “taking it too far,” what are the consequences? There is no tangible punishment for being called ableist other than being called ableist.

One must also consider that the term “chronically online” is also considered ableist by many disability activists. “Chronically online” and “terminally online” are used interchangeably, though the latter is less common. “Chronically” and “terminally” are terms usually reserved for illnesses or disabilities. Disabled people have noted that when used in a pejorative way, these terms continue to stigmatize actual illnesses or disabilities. Generally, disabled people don’t see the term’s meaning as useless and have proposed alternatives such as “extremely online.” But I do take some issue with the idea itself.

Often-cited examples of being “chronically” or “extremely” online also chastize at people for shopping on Amazon or fast-fashion companies, and exaggerating hyper-specific issues and connecting them to larger problems. These extremely online crimes are primarily only committed by liberals and leftists. It’s almost impossible for a conservative to be viewed as extremely online because they’re seen as more realistic and offline than left-wingers. Ironically, there is an entire network of conservative conspiracy theories online — for example, [QAnon](#).¹⁵

¹⁵ So I went down the QAnon rabbit hole. Throughout Trump’s presidency, it’s been thrown around but I never actually took the time to learn who and what they were. Until now. There is an eerie similarity among conservative internet movements starting on places like Reddit and 4chan. Something about the message board and thread concept... Anyway, “Q” is an anonymous informant who is allegedly a government-insider reporting on what’s going on. They amassed a large following of conservatives for dropping alleged hints and stoking theories. Theories include Democratic government officials eating aborted babies to stay powerful, there being a secret earth inside earth called “The Middle Earth Theory,” and the COVID-19 vaccine having sub-microscopic chips in them that will control our brains along with COVID-19 being fake altogether.

“Just Another Chronically Online Crybaby Blue-Haired Liberal. Cope!,” He replied on a Reddit Thread About Liberals Getting Owned by Ben Shapiro

For years, conservatives have shared deranged, otherworldly conspiracy theories on Facebook and outdated Instagram meme pages. I can’t count how many iFunny-style memes about the COVID-19 vaccine, masks, abortions, and liberal politicians eating children I have seen. The majority of the alt-right movement takes place online. Incels are entirely online concepts. All of these things have “extremely online” tendencies but rarely get labeled as such. What’s more, is that these online phenomena have had offline consequences — huge ones. QAnon supporters were largely to blame for the January 6th, 2021 attacks. Incels have been linked to several mass killings from shootings to van attacks. The alt-right is to blame for Charlottesville. These groups have completely intertwined their senses of self and worldviews with these online existences they lead, believing that they know and understand things the average person misses (e.g., [The Red Pill Theory](#)^{16,17}).

Casual and extreme usage of “chronically online” perpetuates the delegitimization of online experiences and online movements. By viewing online as a tertiary or insignificant part of existence, society has viewed online participation as voluntary — even unnecessary. This is untrue.

¹⁶ The Red Pill Theory is based on *The Matrix* (1999). Being “red-pilled” is becoming aware of the systems at play (ironically, you could say being “woke”). But for “red-pillers” the systems at play are feminism and liberal ideologies that are actually oppressing cis-white males because these “systems” undermine whiteness, hegemonic masculinity, and heteronormativity.

¹⁷ By the way, the writers and creators of *The Matrix* (1999), Lana and Lilly Wachowski have repeatedly confirmed that the movie is an allegory for the transgender experience in America especially at the end of the 90s after two decades of AIDS/HIV killing trans people.

A significant portion — if not the majority — of human data and information is stored on the internet. Many offline forms of data compilation and storage are [now obsolete](#)¹⁸ because of their vulnerabilities. Online banking, for example, is increasingly common with many major cities across the globe phasing out the usage of physical cards. New York's MTA system plans on phasing out MetroCards, instead using [OMNY](#)¹⁹ which is a touchless system that allows patrons to pay with their cell phones through ApplePay, GooglePay, or the OMNY app.

With these huge changes in the way the internet affects our lives, it raises the question: can you live an offline life? Currently, the answer is yes. However, there would be major consequences. You probably wouldn't know sociocultural movements or current events as quickly. Physical maps are far less available and are likely to be out of date. Information on public transportation would be hard to find offline. There is also no telling where the future will lead. The end of the century may find humanity completely unable to live offline in any capacity.

If the internet already possesses a massive significance in our lives, then how accurately can we determine what it means to be too online? The CNET definition described chronically online as spending so much time online that their perception of reality becomes skewed. But how do we measure a skewed perception of reality? If a skewed perception of reality exists, there must be an objective one. But reality is highly subjective. Think about race in America. Many

¹⁸ With that being said, the internet is not foolproof. The internet is an archive, but — like all archives — a faulty one. As human events continue to take place on and be influenced by the internet, the importance of properly recording them rises. For the most part, this isn't happening. Archives like the Wayback Machine in the Internet Archive on archive.org require websites and posts to be manually saved. If they are not saved here and if no one has a screenshot or recording saved on their devices, then it is gone. Forever. Even saving screenshots on devices is not a reliable practice because devices can malfunction, files can corrupt, and log-in information can be lost.

¹⁹ Criticisms of this system include that this will limit MTA accessibility for older patrons, disabled patrons, and — most notably — homeless patrons who may rarely — if ever — have cash to buy MetroCards, much less credit cards and cell phones. Opposing arguments have been that these groups are not the MTA's targeted customers — you know, because a city's public transport system should have a target demographic.

feel as though race is a non-factor in people's realities, or even that [traditionally marginalized races are not marginalized but extremely privileged](#)^{20,21} in modern society. The 2020 Black Lives Matter movement only heightened this belief for many. Conservative pundits²² routinely touted that Black people were allowed to destroy neighborhoods over nothing.

American conservatives are on a mission to destroy all modes of leftist change. Since its introduction to the public, the internet has largely been against conservatives. According to the Pew Research Center, the majority of conservatives across the United States are over the age of 50. People over 50 have historically been against and have had difficulties adjusting to technological innovation, which made understanding the explosive world of internet chat rooms, forums, blogs, and dating websites unbearable and detestable. The internet gave birth to paradigm-shifting movements such as the #MeToo and Body Positivity movements. Through the internet, overdue conversations about consent, sexuality, and even [work environments](#).²³ All of these worked to do exactly what conservatives had long feared: alienate dogmatic principles that enforced the status quo. The [internet](#)²⁴ has been the ultimate mode of leftist change.

²⁰ Some East Asian and white college students are arguing against affirmative action in a landmark case, claiming that less qualified Black students got into Ivy League schools when they didn't. The case will be decided summer of 2023.

²¹ 8th graders at my school had to take a career & college assessment. After finishing, I asked a classmate where they planned on going to college. Blank-faced, this John-Deere and camo-boot-clad waif of a boy responded, "Oh, I'm not going to college because I can't afford it. Only Black people get to go to college for free." I'm a first-generation, Black student at an elite PWI. My acceptance came with significant self-doubt. Once, a South Asian man claimed that I and the other Black students in an NYU group chat have affirmative action to thank for our admittance. I attended a sub-rural high school in Georgia, underfunded and under-resourced. I graduate from NYU in May 2023. I'm attending graduate school in the fall. I've excelled in many of my classes, made fulfilling connections. Maybe affirmative action got me in, *maybe*. But I am currently \$110,000 in debt from my undergraduate degree.

²² <https://apnews.com/article/us-capitol-siege-trump-supporters-8edfd3bb994568b7cdcd2243ad769101>

²³ My mutuals on Twitter casually quote Karl Marx and make jokes about Mao Zedong. Knowing excerpts of *The Communist Manifesto* are the bare minimum requirement for understanding certain spaces on Twitter. I'd bet Conservative Twitter isn't casually quoting Adam Smith or John Maynard Keynes.

²⁴ That, the printing press, and (most) global literacy initiatives.

However, while the 50+ conservatives were bitching and moaning, the younger conservatives were hard at work turning the internet into a tool for fascism.²⁵ Young conservatives, nazis, fascists, and alt-righters (IDK what they're calling them these days) have done a marvelous job of creating their own movements through the internet. Even better, they have managed to unite groups of differing desires for the sake of the right wing. I originally thought the analogous terms "chronically online," "terminally online," and "extremely online" originated somewhere amidst the depths of 4chan or Reddit. I was wrong. The word was originally used self-descriptively and somewhat positively. Knowyourmeme.com cites the usage of the term as early as 2015. Comedian Nick Mullen used the Twitter handle "extremely online guy" dating back to August 2015. Other tweets using "extremely online" used the term to describe people whose online identities had become a huge part of their offline personalities. It wasn't until later in the 2010s and early 2020s that "[x] online" became a negative term for others. And unfortunately, it began with people on the left.

How did this happen? I'm unsure, but if I had to guess...

In the post-Trump era, left-wing online spaces developed [a deep sense of self-consciousness](#).²⁶ No one wanted to be [SJWs or blue-haired liberals](#).²⁷ These terms had left

²⁵ Imagine that, the place where the information is limitlessly available could also be used to destroy free access to information.

²⁶ We did a lot of "How did this happen?" as I'm sure most of you did, too. But that quickly devolved into the blame game; liberal white women with conservative husbands who "don't discuss politics" received a lot of shit (deservedly). But then, there was a whole bunch of "What's wrong with left-wing politics?" and a lot of "The ideology is inaccessible" and "You people are all theory and no praxis." But in the end, it was a lot of blaming the little guy. The young queer kids who just ate the apple and realized the world was on fire. Kids who were coming into their own. Kids who wanted words to describe the realities they were thrust into. Kids who wanted to feel like they were doing something, *anything*. So thrust into the era of words without real meaning and praxis, they picked up words like "ableist," "fatphobic," "racist," and "heterosexist" and described the ableist, fatphobic, racist, and heterosexist things they were seeing. Sure, maybe they were a bit overzealous and maybe they strongly believed in consequences having actions (thus, the advent of canceling). But how convenient is it to blame the fucked-over children for the ineffectiveness of the American left-wing?

²⁷ My insecurity about my emerging social consciousness made being called an SJW feel worse than being called a slur. In fact, I was called both an SJW and real slurs in high school. I wasn't even using terms like ableist, fatphobic, or heterosexist then (I didn't know them). I simply

online spaces and become national headlines and verbal weapons. Ben Shapiro was a high-ranking member of the Trump Train. Alpha-male, rise-and-grind bros were all of a sudden political analysts. Liberals had been just liberals before, but the great merge of online and offline worlds had left us out in the open. Some people dug their heels and stood ten-toes-down, embracing their radical leftist identities. But others shrunk in the spotlight. While they held onto their liberal beliefs, they also became resentful of those who were a little “too” liberal.

Nowadays, leftist spaces are filled with people ready to call out and chastise one another for just about anything. While a lot of these call-outs are warranted, some instances are just bullying. So few of these criticisms truly consider important community-building skills. Rather, they seek and destroy, alienating individuals from their community instead of correcting them.

Coming of Age is Digital and Human Development Has Been Digitized.

A man once told me that everything that could be digitized will eventually be digitized, so we better start preparing. He is predicting a world in which every aspect of humanity will be replaced by a computer. But the most essential aspect of human psychological development has already been digitized: childhood and coming of age. iPad kids are the norm. Children under 13 regularly use some form of mobile internet-connected device. Parents are being called lazy for delegating the task of raising their children to tablets. People fear kids becoming antisocial because of their severely stunted social skills. There are three brief ways I want to analyze this:

dared to be an outspoken Black lesbian in McDonough, GA. Sure, I got into arguments on Twitter and held tense debates in class. But I was still a child. A lonely child who was scared shitless after 2016. No one had asked me what I wanted, but if they did, I would have told them that I dreamed of being happy and, stable, having a wife, being able to afford college, being able to afford clothes and vacations, being an editor at Vogue – all simple, teenage dreams that were not even the slightest bit unreasonable. But those dreams were stolen from me and I wanted to fight. I refused to take this shit lying down. So I did what I could. I couldn't shoot a gun, so I used words as my rock and sling.

1. Parents have long since delegated the socialization of their children to third parties, especially in the West. Before iPads, there was [television](#).²⁸ Generation X (1965–1990) is known as the MTV generation because of the way that MTV shaped their way of understanding the world.
2. Socialization has never been the sole responsibility of the [parents](#).²⁹ Socialization is the responsibility of the community. Ever since schooling became mandatory for American children, parents relinquished a large amount of control over their children's [socialization](#).³⁰
3. Despite the risk of potentially stunted social development, the internet has democratized coming of age. When used properly, it can be powerful.

We have to accept that coming of age is now digital. Two generations have experienced at least some part of their teenage years online. The term “extremely online” (and its variations) was originally used by people who understood that their existence was majorly influenced by

²⁸ As an older member of Gen-Z, I spent much of my childhood parked in front of a television. I didn't get a real cell phone until I was 12 or 13 years old. I often say that television raised me and taught me how to be. And you know what, as fucked as the internet has made me, television was not any better. Television instilled unrealistic expectations (on love, career, and personal happiness) that lingered even after social media became a key part of my life. Perhaps, it was even worse for me to learn about social interactions and human emotion through fictional television shows. It certainly distorted my views on wealth and family.

²⁹ I do believe that family unit is an important basis for socialization. However, a family unit can take on different forms and meanings. A true family unit is a stable, consistent, supportive social structure in which a child is raised. The internet is none of this as it is constantly shifting and changing while being disparaging. However, the internet is not the first destabilizing element in child-rearing. Capitalism has divorced parents from their children, especially in an era where families can no longer survive on a single income. In my 20s, I am hyper-aware of the fact that television and the internet supplemented much of my own socialization. My mom had to work constantly which meant there was no one to drive me to or pick me up from after-school sports or clubs. I lived vicariously through the children I saw on television and the teenagers I saw online.

³⁰ Ironic because the standardization of school was intended to prepare children for the workforce, a core tenant of Western capitalism. However, conservatives have been and continue to be highly aware of the fact that they relinquished control over their children's socialization. Conservatives are fully aware that they have almost no control over who their children become and the current social model does not punish children for not fulfilling their parents' wishes. Conservatives are huge proponents of homeschooling because they can actively control this central tenant of their child's socialization. But homeschooling isn't enough or even feasible for most people, so now states like Florida and politicians like Governor Ron Desantis are actively working to change schools to fit conservatives.

online spaces. Negative usage of the term “extremely online” is a reflection of this as well. To use the term “extremely online,” you have to maintain some level of online existence. Labeling someone as “extremely online” is drawing a line in the sand: *being online is okay, but there is such a thing as being too online and you have reached it*. Older Millennials and Gen-Z use this term against younger members of Gen-Z and even the eldest members of Generation Alpha (born between 2010-2025) — kids who are actively experiencing their coming of age online.

The fear, anger, pity, or second-hand embarrassment that drives one person to call another person [x] online has a motivating factor — consequences, usually. But what are the consequences of being too online?

Despite my disagreement with the idea that one can be [x] online, if not already clear, being extremely online — especially during my adolescence — has had adverse effects on me. [I am perpetually unsure of myself, my identity, and my place.](#)³¹ The great gift of the internet is [awareness](#),³² whether self-awareness or awareness of others, our brains are becoming exposed to more and learning more [patterns](#)³³ than at any other point in human history. People on the

³¹ I often don't consider myself as part of genderqueer communities because I am afraid of taking up space, despite having a very specific view of my gender that other genderqueer people hold. When telling this to my trans-femme friend, they looked me in the eye and said, “That’s stupid.” I balked at the statement, unsure of what to say next. I told them it’s because I didn’t want to take up space. To which they said, “There is no limit on space. You are who you are. You shouldn’t be afraid to identify as such because you’re worried about what people might say.” We were at a party and the topic quickly changed after that. But as I stared at my reflection in the mirror while brushing my teeth one night, their words replayed in my head. I had to realize they were right, at least to some extent. But I had to wonder how I got here.

³² This awareness is biased. And some people resist one form of awareness and choose to be “aware” of things that benefit them or confirm their own worldviews.

³³ Another aspect of [x] onliness is neuro-divergency, specifically autism. Neuro-divergent people are often accused of being [x] online. Many people who are on the autism spectrum can experience heightened pattern recognition and often feel compelled to point it out. Online spaces can be both a blessing and a curse for autistic people. As described in *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell notes that the advent of the internet has allowed marginalized people room to explore themselves free from their offline limitations. Autistic people have been able to develop and spread techniques for communication that were previously unavailable to them (e.g., tone indicators (/j, /s, /srs)). But autistic people are routinely bullied or harassed for the way they interact with others both online and offline. When autistic people call out -isms they witness online, their autism is often brought into the responses. In 2021 and 2022, people on TikTok called autism and ADHD “trends,” delegitimizing the way that neurodivergent people exist on and off the internet.

internet have claimed this to be a bad thing — “we humans are not meant to be exposed to this much information all at once.” There is no limit to the human brain that we have reached societally. From trains to telegraphs to telephones to radios to television to space travel, and even to virtual realities, we have continued to push the limits of understanding and realities, and we haven’t broken them yet. Our brains haven’t glitched out or melted out of ear canals. Perhaps, extreme online-ness is the beginning of this psychosis or mental limit that those against technology have always predicted. Somehow unlimited access to Tumblr threads, Reddit posts, tweets, and Instagram infographics has finally done it.

And if social media has done what trains, television, and space travel couldn’t: Now what? If you see someone spinning out of control, losing their mind, and completely coming undone, what do you do? Do you stop to help them, perhaps alert professionals who could assist? Or do you bully them in front of millions of viewers and hope maybe they get better? If someone is suffering from a “chronic illness,” [why not treat it?](#)³⁴

³⁴ A completely ironic statement. Ironic because society treats people with disabilities horrifically. If not inspiration porn, then disabled people are cause for eugenics or something to be ignored. If onlineness is an illness, then people are treating the ill the way they always have.