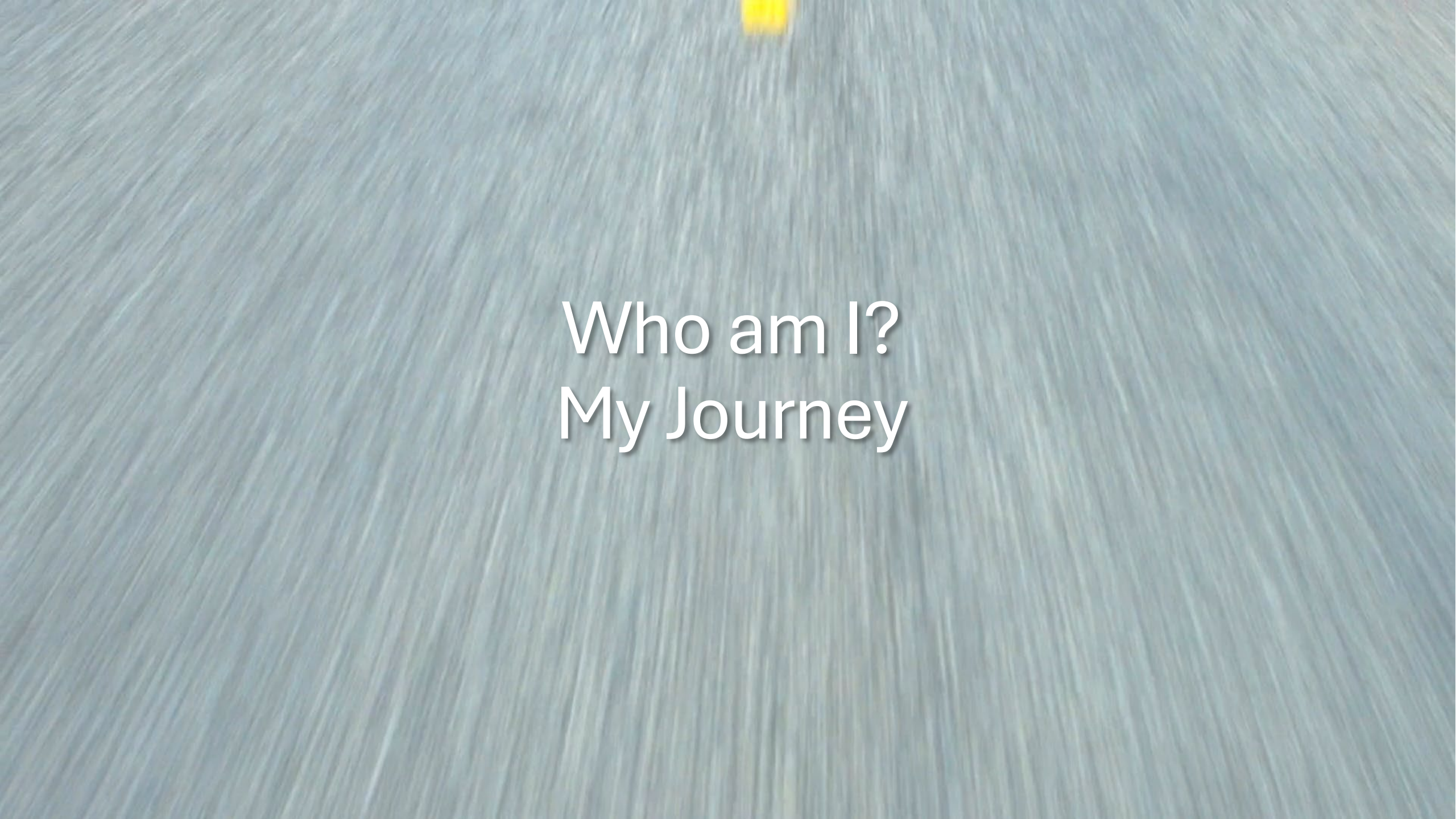
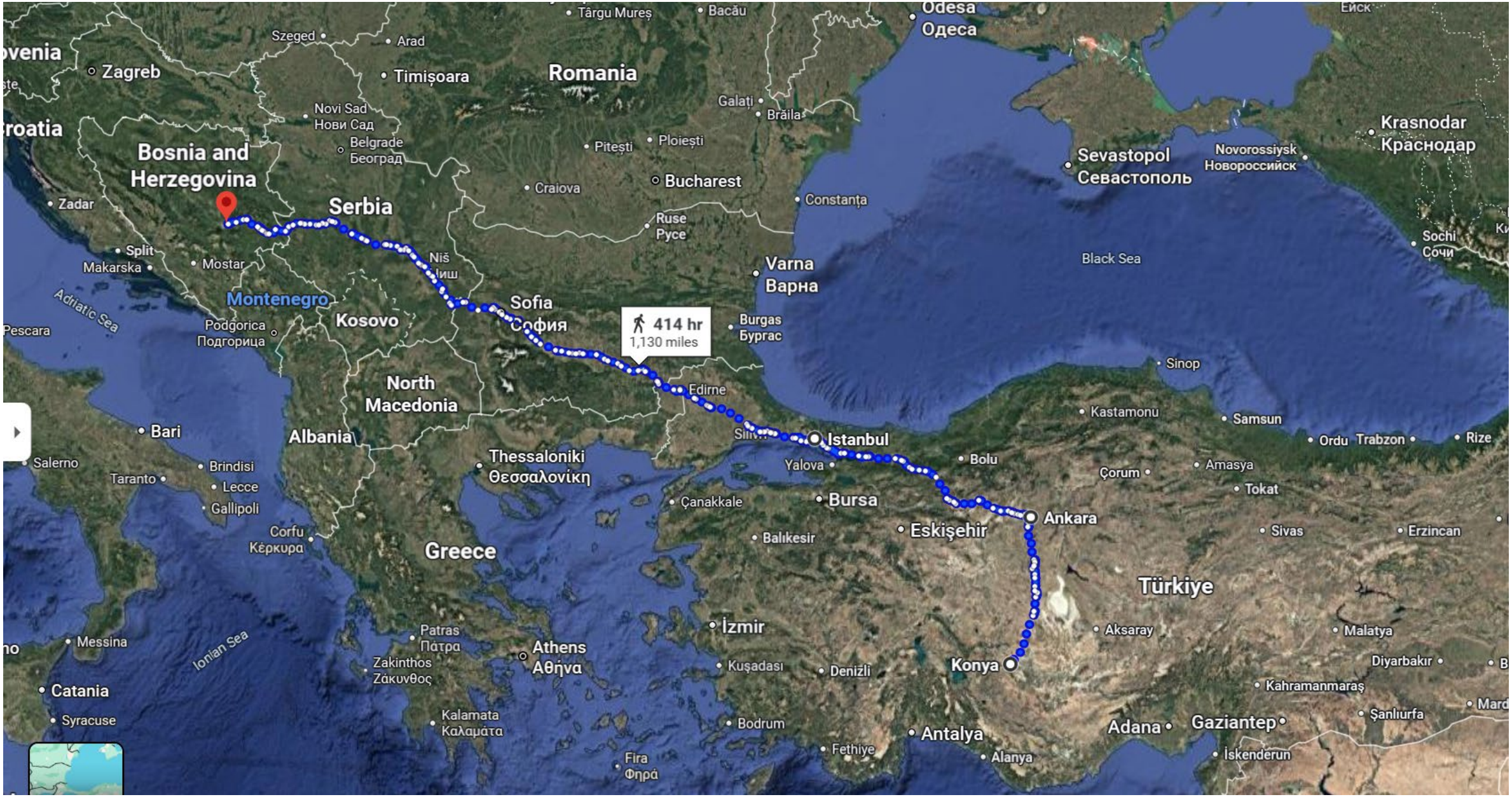
The Social Media Paradox Friend or Foe for Real Connection

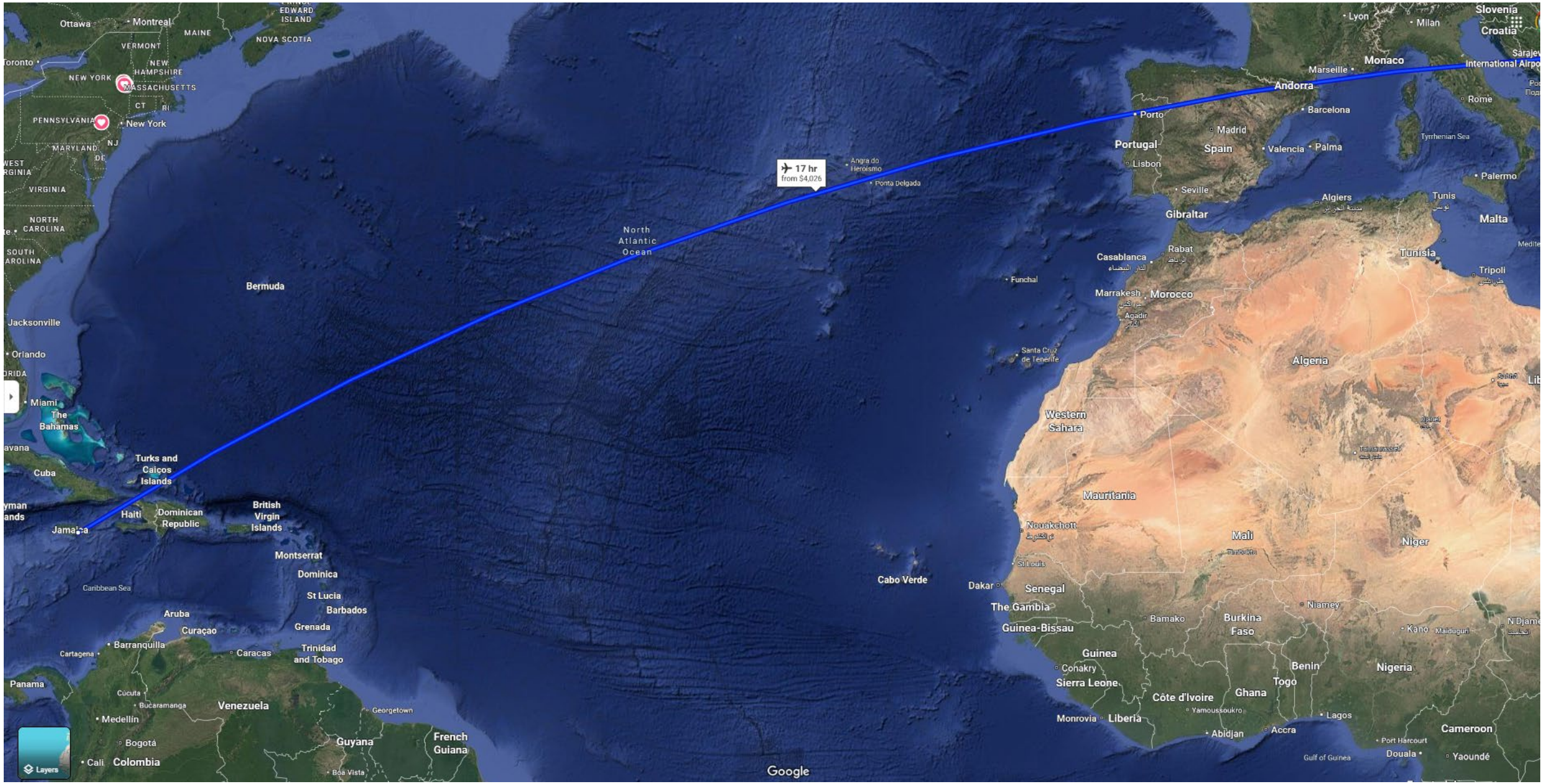


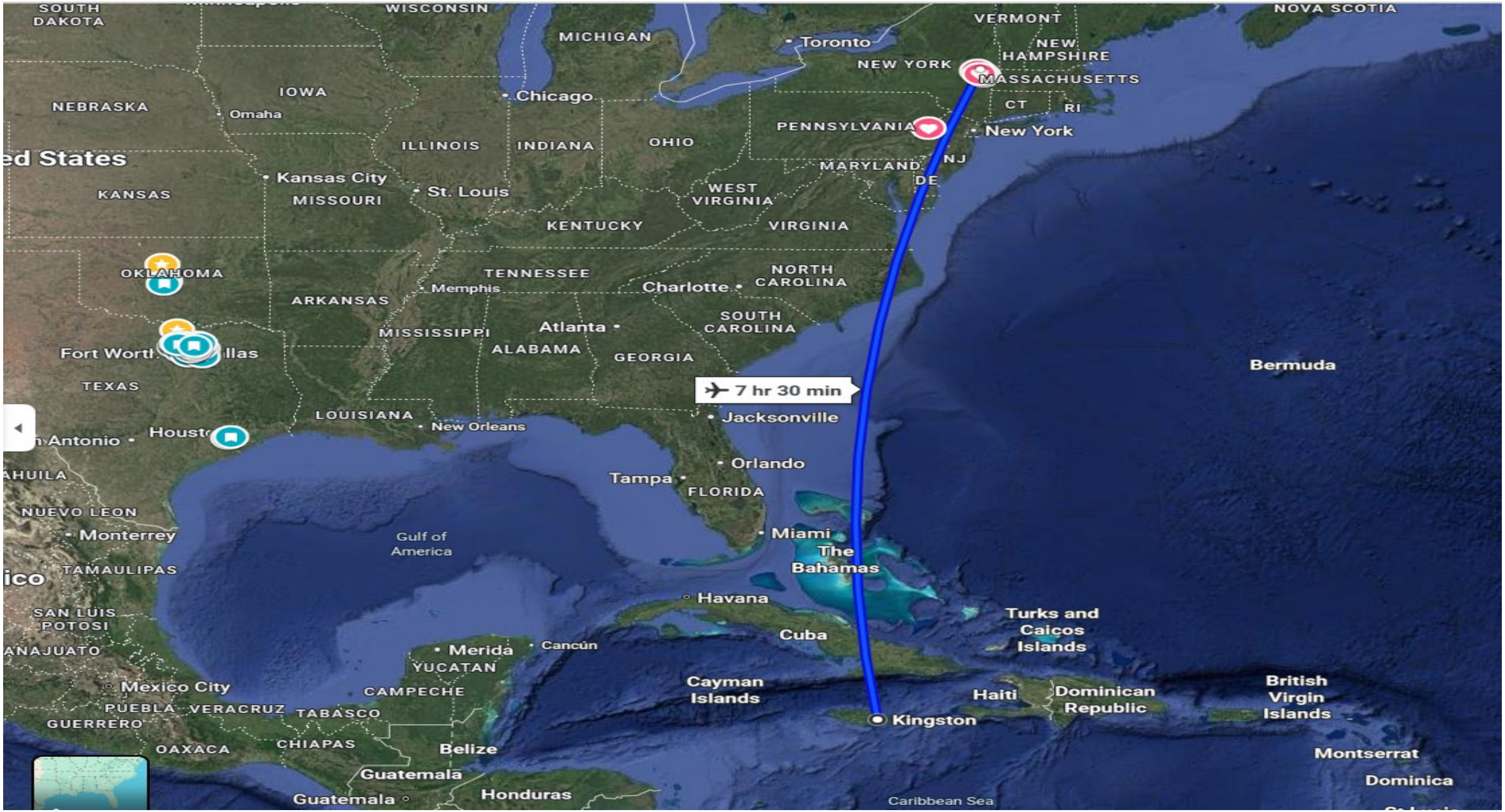
Zeynep Orhan

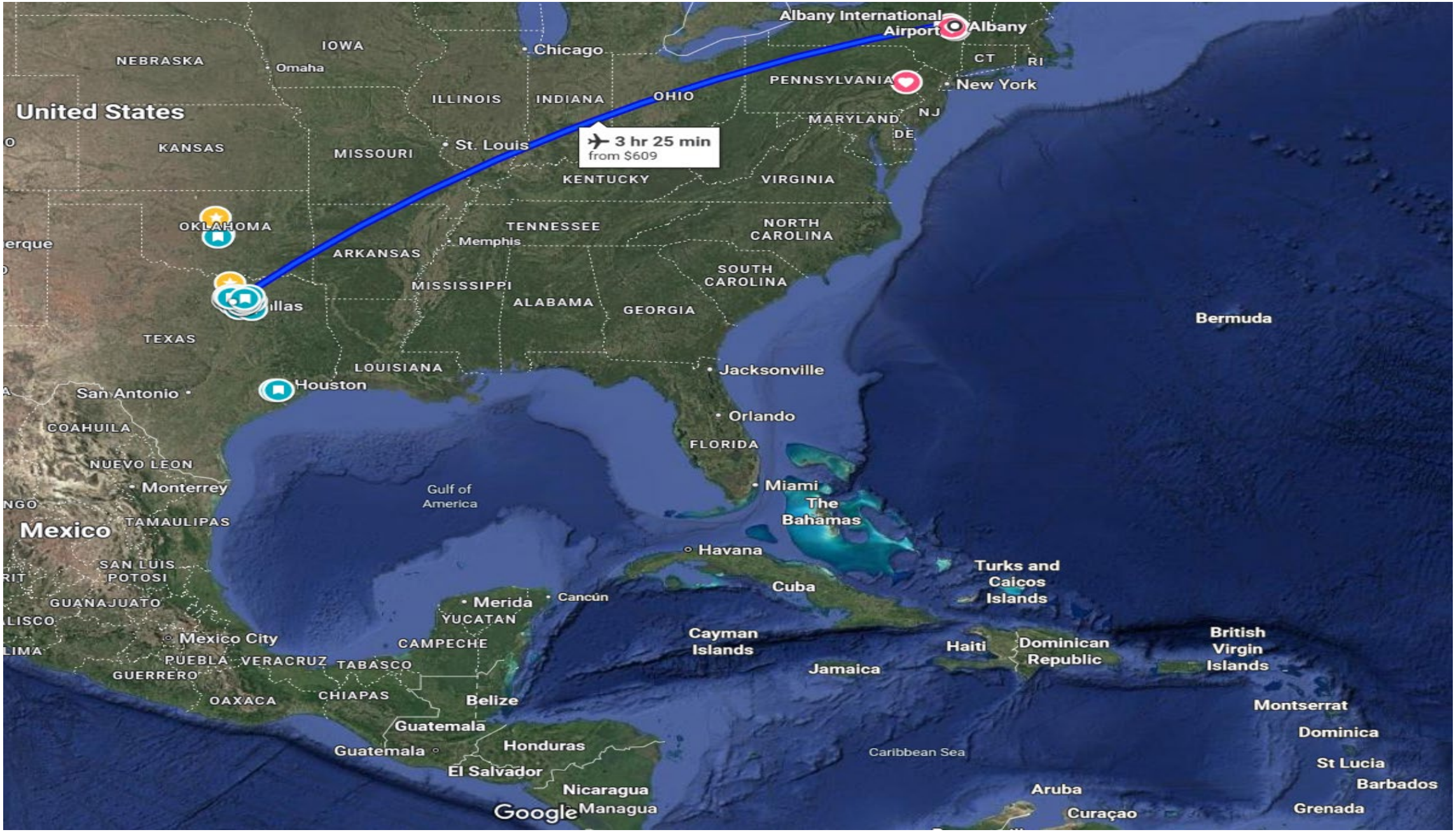
Zeynep.Orhan@unt.edu


Who am I?
My Journey


414 hr
1,130 miles
Zagreb
Timișoara
Romania
Novi Sad
Нови Сад
Belgrade
Београд
Bosnia and
Herzegovina
Serbia
Pitești
Ploiești
Galați
Brăila
Bucharest
Craiova
Constanța
Ruse
Pyce
Varna
Варна
Burgas
Буpгас
Sofia
София
Niš
Ниш
Montenegro
Kosovo
North
Macedonia
Albania
Thessaloniki
Θεσσαλονίκη
Greece
Edirne
Istanbul
Bolu
Yalova
Çanakkale
Bursa
Eskişehir
Ankara
Balıkesir
İzmir
Kuşadası
Denizli
Konya
Türkiye
Aksaray
Kastamonu
Samsun
Sinop
Çorum
Amasya
Tokat
Ordu
Trabzon
Rize
Sivas
Erzincan
Malatya
Diyarbakır
Kahramanmaraş
Şanlıurfa
Gaziantep
Adana
Antalya
Alanya
Fethiye
Bodrum
İskenderun
Sevastopol
Севастополь
Novorossiysk
Новороссийск
Krasnodar
Краснодар
Sochi
Сочи
Black Sea
Odesa
Одеса
Zadar
Split
Makarska
Mostar
Podgorica
Подгорица
Adriatic Sea
Pescara
Bari
Salerno
Brindisi
Taranto
Lecce
Gallipoli
Corfu
Κέρκυρα
Ionian Sea
Messina
Catania
Syracuse
Patras
Πάτρα
Zakinthos
Ζάκυνθος
Athens
Αθήνα
Kalamata
Καλαμάτα
Fira
Φηρά


17 hr
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PENNSYLVANIA
New York
NJ
MARYLAND
DE
VIRGINIA
NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA
Bermuda
North Atlantic Ocean
Angra do Heroísmo
Ponta Delgada
Jacksonville
Orlando
Miami
The Bahamas
Cuba
Turks and Caicos Islands
Haiti
Dominican Republic
British Virgin Islands
Jamaica
Montserrat
Dominica
St Lucia
Barbados
Grenada
Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Sea
Aruba
Curaçao
Barranquilla
Cartagena
Caracas
Panama
Cúcuta
Bucaramanga
Venezuela
Medellín
Bogotá
Cali
Colombia
Georgetown
Guyana
French Guiana
Boa Vista
Lyon
Milan
Slovenia
Croatia
Marseille
Monaco
Andorra
Porto
Barcelona
Rome
Madrid
Portugal
Spain
Valencia
Palma
Tyrrhenian Sea
Lisbon
Seville
Palermo
Algiers
Tunis
Gibraltar
Malta
Casablanca
Rabat
Tunisia
Tripoli
Funchal
Marrakesh
Morocco
Agadir
Santa Cruz de Tenerife
Algeria
Western Sahara
Mauritania
Nouakchott
Mali
Niger
St Louis
Cabo Verde
Dakar
Senegal
The Gambia
Guinea-Bissau
Bamako
Burkina Faso
Niamey
Kano
Maiduguri
Guinea
Conakry
Sierra Leone
Liberia
Monrovia
Côte d'Ivoire
Yamoussoukro
Ghana
Benin
Togo
Nigeria
Abidjan
Accra
Lagos
Port Harcourt
Cameroon
Douala
Yaoundé
Gulf of Guinea
Layers
Google


SOUTH DAKOTA
WISCONSIN
MICHIGAN
Toronto
VERMONT
NOVA SCOTIA
NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW YORK
MASSACHUSETTS
CT
RI
IOWA
Chicago
NEBRASKA
Omaha
PENNSYLVANIA
New York
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
OHIO
MARYLAND
NJ
DE
Kansas City
St. Louis
KANSAS
MISSOURI
WEST VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
OKLAHOMA
TENNESSEE
NORTH CAROLINA
Memphis
Charlotte
ARKANSAS
SOUTH CAROLINA
Atlanta
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
Fort Worth
TEXAS
7 hr 30 min
Bermuda
LOUISIANA
Jacksonville
New Orleans
Houston
Orlando
Tampa
FLORIDA
NUEVO LEON
Monterrey
Gulf of America
Miami
The Bahamas
TAMAULIPAS
Havana
SAN LUIS POTOSI
Turks and Caicos Islands
Cuba
Merida
Cancún
YUCATAN
Mexico City
CAMPECHE
Cayman Islands
Haiti
Dominican Republic
British Virgin Islands
PUEBLA
VERACRUZ
TABASCO
GUERRERO
Kingston
OAXACA
CHIAPAS
Belize
Montserrat
Guatemala
Dominica
Honduras
Caribbean Sea


Albany International Airport
Albany
Chicago
IOWA
NEBRASKA
Omaha
CT
RI
PENNSYLVANIA
New York
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
OHIO
United States
MARYLAND
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KANSAS
MISSOURI
St. Louis
3 hr 25 min
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Memphis
ARKANSAS
SOUTH CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
Bermuda
TEXAS
LOUISIANA
Jacksonville
Houston
San Antonio
Orlando
COAHUILA
FLORIDA
NUEVO LEON
Monterrey
Gulf of America
Miami
The Bahamas
Mexico
TAMAULIPAS
Havana
SAN LUIS POTOSI
Turks and Caicos Islands
Cuba
GUANAJUATO
Merida
Cancún
YUCATAN
Cayman Islands
Mexico City
CAMPECHE
Haiti
Dominican Republic
British Virgin Islands
PUEBLA
VERACRUZ
TABASCO
Jamaica
GUERRERO
OAXACA
CHIAPAS
Belize
Montserrat
Guatemala
Dominica
Honduras
Caribbean Sea
Guatemala
St Lucia
El Salvador
Barbados
Nicaragua
Aruba
Google
Managua
Curaçao
Grenada



Social Media

- Social media helps us stay connected across distance.
- It also competes for our time, attention, privacy, sleep, and peace of mind.
- This session is not anti-technology. Social media can be a gift.
- The question is not only whether social media is good or bad.
- The better question is this: **Is social media helping us live a more connected life, or is it quietly replacing real connection?**

What is Social Media for You?

- Which social media platforms do you know, use, or avoid?
- Which ones do your children or grandchildren use?
- Which ones have you heard about but never tried?
- Which ones do you trust most?
- Which ones make you uncomfortable?





- **Messaging and groups:**
  - ***WhatsApp (US)***: global,
  - ***Messenger (US)***: global,
  - ***Telegram (international/Russia-linked)***: Eurasia and Middle East,
  - ***Signal (US)***: global privacy users,
  - ***Viber (Israel/Japan-linked)***: Eastern Europe and Middle East,
  - ***WeChat (China)***: China,
  - ***LINE (Japan)***: East Asia,
  - ***KakaoTalk (South Korea)***: South Korea,
  - ***Zalo (Vietnam)***: Vietnam.

Social Media is Bigger Than Facebook

Social Media Is Bigger Than Facebook



General networking:

- ***Facebook (US)***: global,
- ***Instagram (US)***: global,
- ***VK (Russia)***: Russia region,
- ***Weibo (China)***: China,
- ***Threads (US)***: global,
- ***X (US)***: global.

Short videos:

- ***TikTok (China/international)***: global,
- ***Douyin (China)***: China,
- ***Kuaishou (China)***: China,
- ***Moj (India)***: India,
- ***ShareChat (India)***: India,
- ***Likee (Singapore)***: Asia and Middle East.

Social Media Is Also Entertainment, Work, and Community



Videos and livestreams:

- ***YouTube (US)***: global,
- ***Twitch (US)***: global,
- ***Bilibili (China)***: China,
- ***Bigo Live (Singapore)***: Asia and Middle East.

Discussion communities:

- ***Reddit (US)***: global,
- ***Quora (US)***: global/India,
- ***Discord (US)***: global,
- ***Tumblr (US)***: niche communities.

Social Media Is Also Entertainment, Work, and Community



Lifestyle and visual ideas:

- ***Pinterest (US)***: global,
- ***Xiaohongshu/RedNote (China)***: China/global,
- ***Lemon8 (ByteDance-linked)***: Asia,
- ***BeReal (France)***: Europe/US.

Professional and learning:

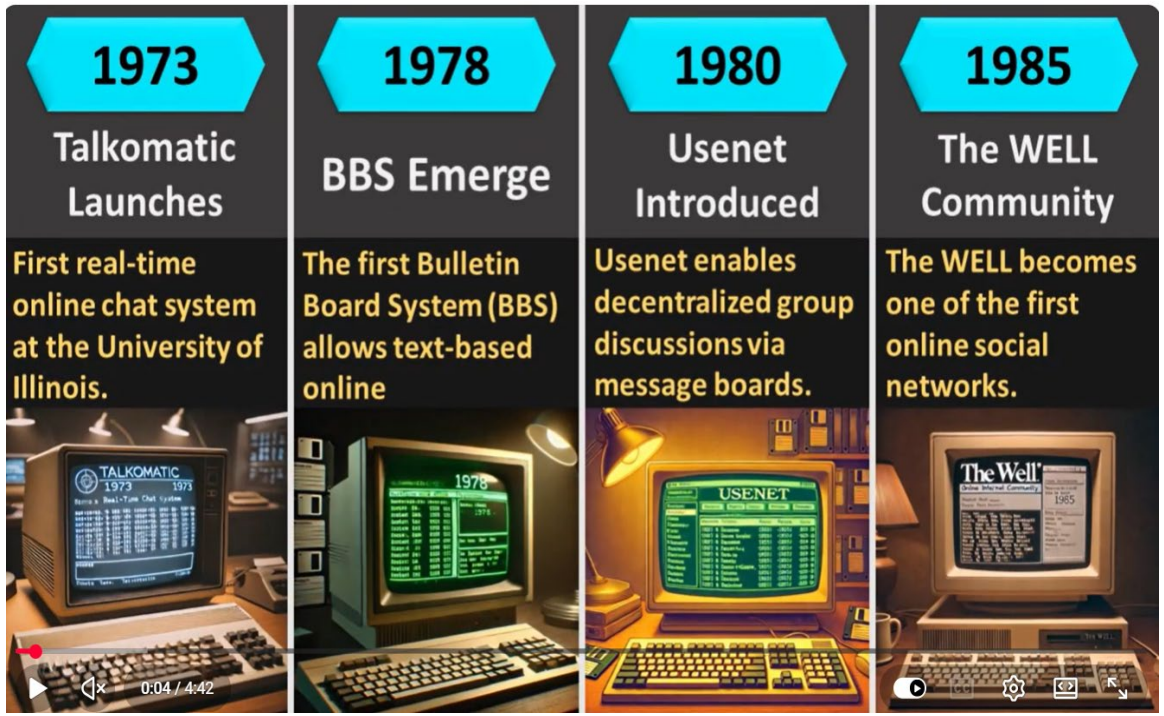
- ***LinkedIn (US)***: global,
- ***ResearchGate (Germany)***: academics,
- ***GitHub (US)***: developers,
- ***StackOverflow (US)***: developers.

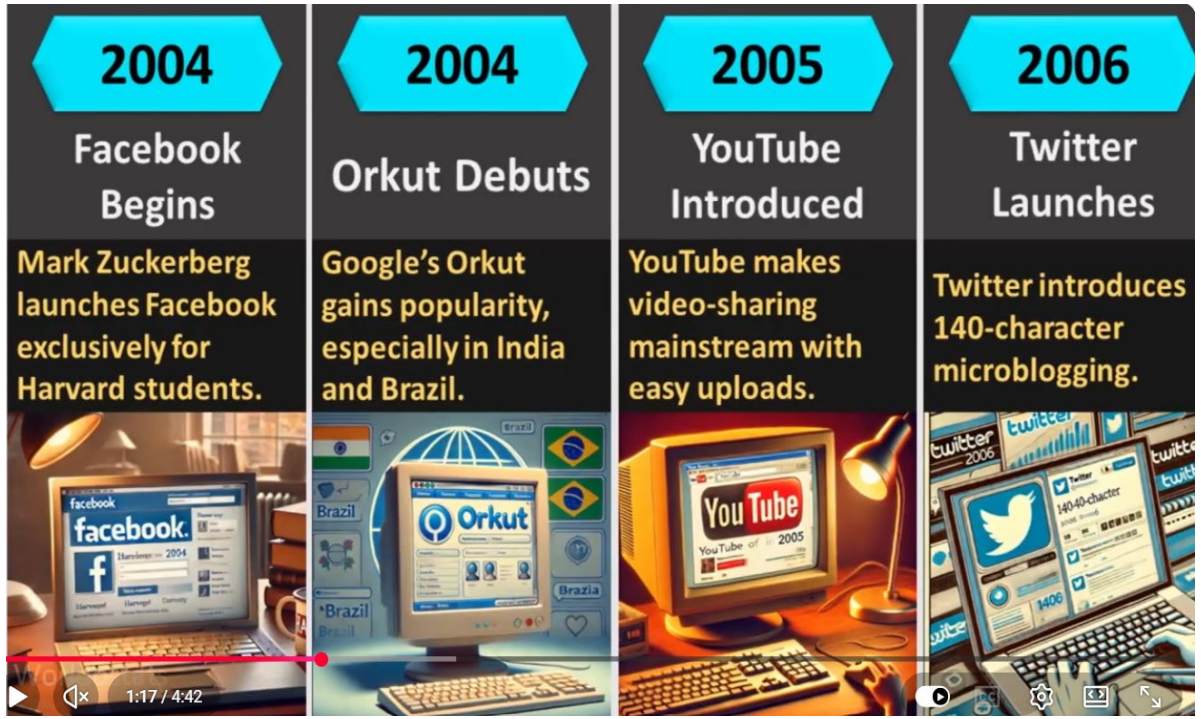
Local and hobbies:

- ***Nextdoor (US)***: US/UK/Canada/Australia,
- ***Meetup (US)***: global cities,
- ***Tripadvisor (US)***: global,
- ***Goodreads (US)***: readers,
- ***Strava (US)***: fitness users.

Video: Social Media Timeline-how Quickly Social Media Platforms Appeared, Grew, Changed, And Disappeared

- Social Media Timeline and Most Popular Social Media 2004–2025





Reflection: Social Media Timeline

- What surprised you?
- Which platform did you use first?
- Which platform changed your daily life most?
- Which platform do younger people in your family use most?
- What does this fast change tell us about learning, privacy, habits, and trust?



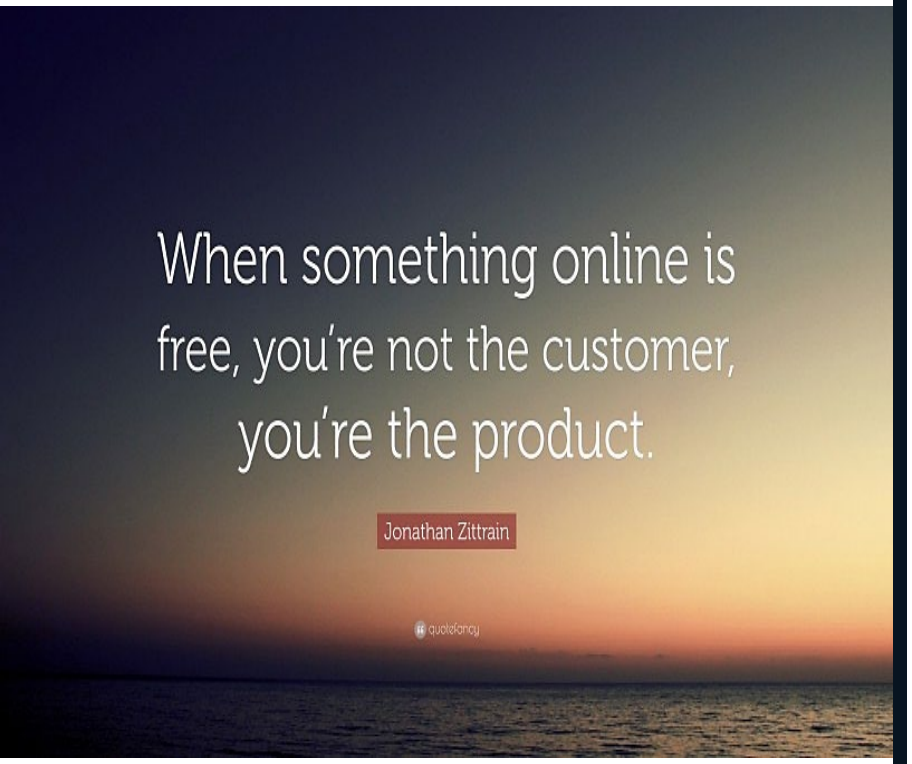
Reflection: Popularity

- Popularity does not always mean quality.
  - A platform can become popular because it is useful.
  - A platform can also become popular because it is addictive, entertaining, or hard to leave.
- Questions:
  - Do you trust a platform more when many people use it?
  - Have you ever joined a platform because “everyone was there”?
  - Have you ever stayed on a platform even after it stopped feeling useful?





Time Is the Real Currency



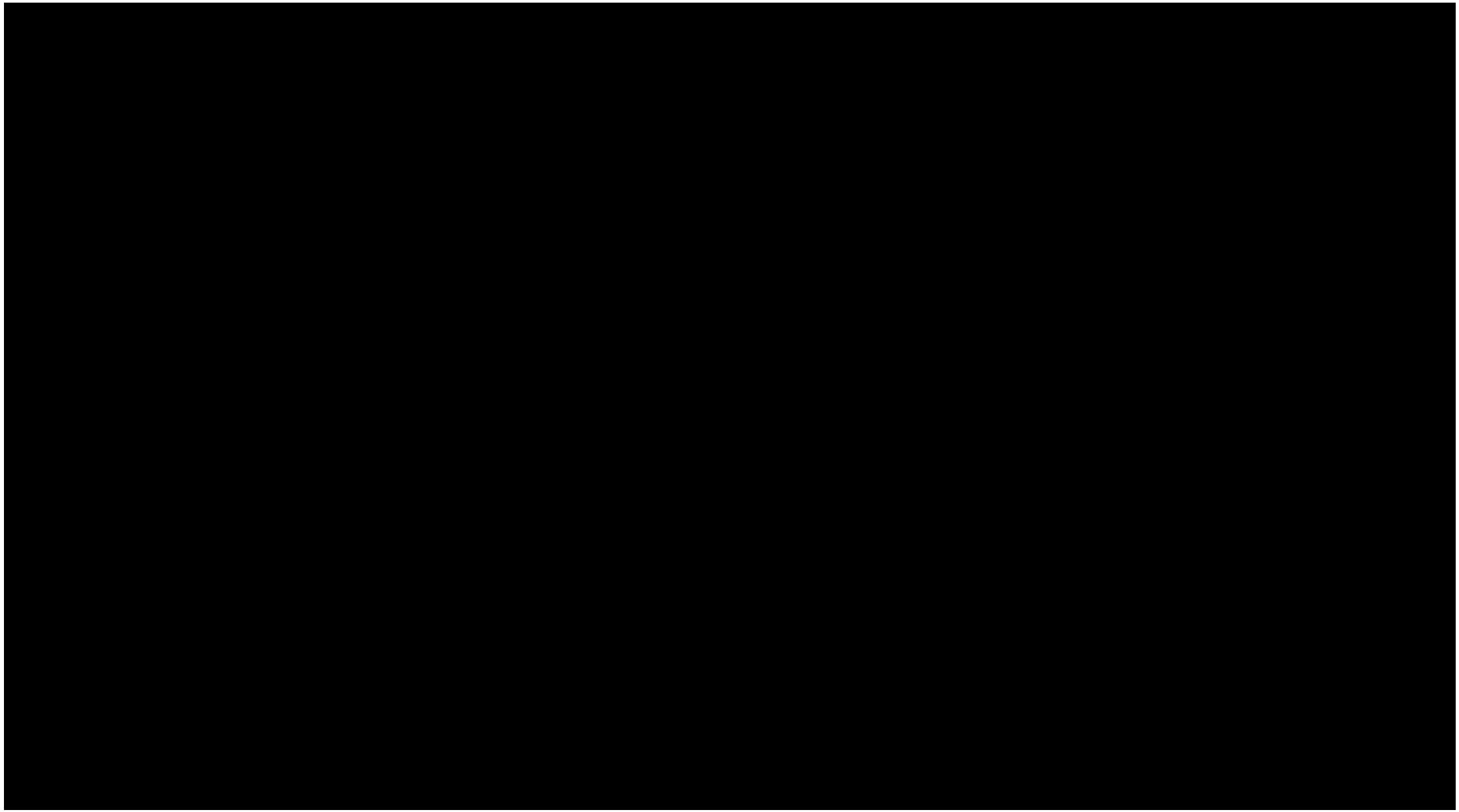
Social media is usually free in dollars.

It is not free in

- time,
- attention,
- data,
- emotion, and
- mental energy.

A free app may still cost us something important.

Video: How Daily Life, Work, Leisure, and Attention Have Changed Across Generations



Reflection: Time-Use



- Where did people gain time?
- Where did people lose time?
- What changed most across generations?
- What activities became easier?
- What activities became weaker?
- How much of our time is chosen, and how much is pulled by screens?

Who Do Americans Spend Time With?



Time with other people changes across the life course.

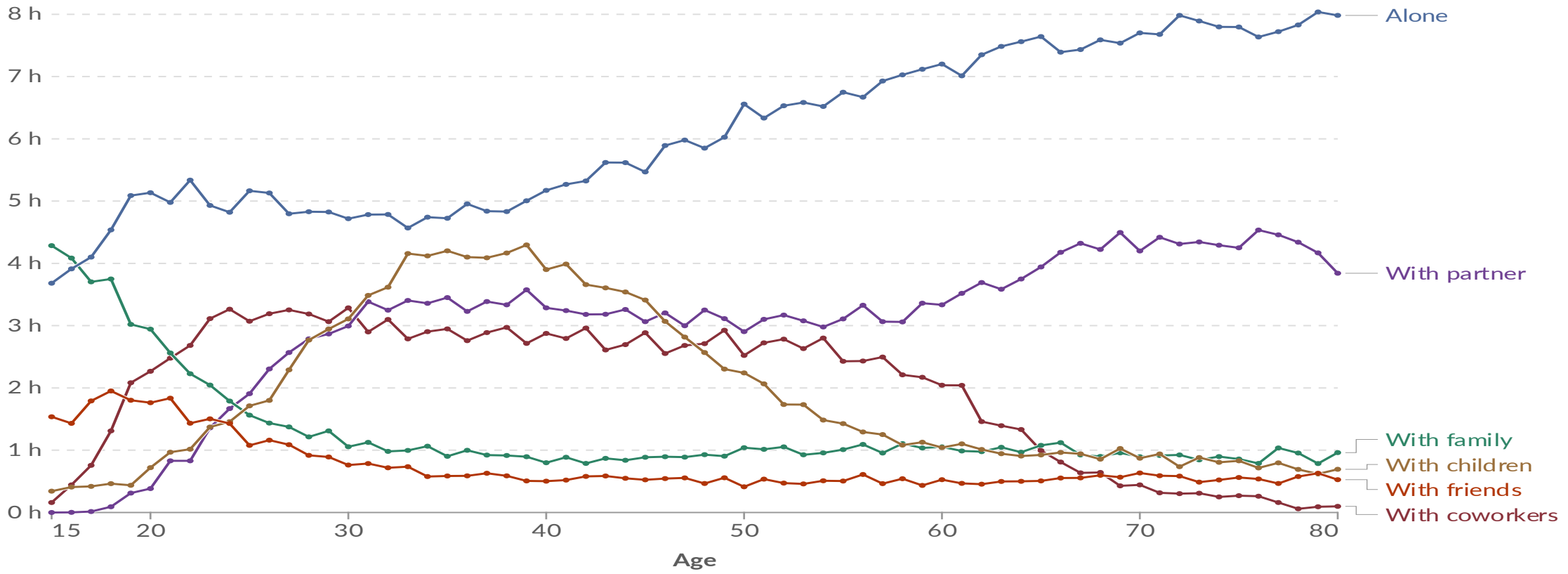


The Our World in Data chart uses U.S. time-use surveys from 2010 to 2024 and shows average hours per day spent with different relationship groups by age. (Our World in Data, 2024)

Who Americans spend their time with, by age, All people

Our World in Data

Measured in hours per day, based on averages from surveys in the United States between 2010 and 2024.



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025)

OurWorldinData.org/time-use | CC BY

Note: Activities such as sleeping, grooming, and personal care are not included in the data. Relationships used to categorize people are not exhaustive and time spent with multiple people counts toward all (e.g., attending a party with friends and partner counts toward both "friends" and "partner").

Reflection: Time with Others





- What do you notice about time with friends, family, alone?
- What might this mean for people over 50?
- Can social media reduce loneliness, or can it hide loneliness?

Alone Is Not Always Lonely





- Some time alone is healthy.
- Quiet time can support reflection, prayer, reading, creativity, and rest.
- The problem begins when
  - alone time becomes unwanted isolation.
  - online contact replaces warm human presence.

Social Media as a Friend

- Social media can help people stay in touch with family and friends across distance.
- It can help people
  - join communities,
  - find events,
  - learn skills,
  - follow news, and
  - support meaningful causes.
- It can help people with shared experiences find encouragement and belonging.



Social Media as a Friend: Examples



- A grandparent watches a grandchild’s school performance online.
- A retired person joins a local gardening group.
- A patient finds a support group for a health condition.
- A community member learns about a neighborhood event.
- A person reconnects with an old classmate or colleague.

Social Media as a Bridge



Social media

- works best when it becomes a **bridge to real connection**.
- becomes weaker when it becomes a **substitute for real connection.**

A healthier pattern: “I saw your post. Let me call you.”

A weaker pattern: “I liked your post. That is enough.”

A like, emoji, or comment can be kind.

It is usually not the same as a full relationship.

Friend or Foe
Depends on Use



- Social media is not one single experience.
- The same platform can
  - help one person feel connected and
  - leave another person tired, irritated, or lonely.

Social Media Is Called Social, But Is It?



Social media is called “social,” but not always

When you open social media, are you usually

- talking to people or
- watching people?

Friend or Foe Depends on Use



- A 2025 American Survey Center article (Cox, Hammond, & Grace, 2025)
- Active use can include
  - messaging friends,
  - arranging visits,
  - learning,
  - sharing encouragement, and
  - participating in community life.
- Passive use can include
  - endless scrolling,
  - watching strangers,
  - comparing lives,
  - reacting to outrage, and
  - consuming content without real interaction.

A Few Produce, Many Consume



- Social media has shifted from ~~**friendship**~~ and ~~**conversation**~~ toward **passive consumption, personal branding, advertising, and content selling**.
- **X / Twitter:** 10% of users produced **92%** of posts.
- **TikTok:** 25% of users posted nearly all videos.
- **YouTube:** Many more people watch videos rather than prepare them.

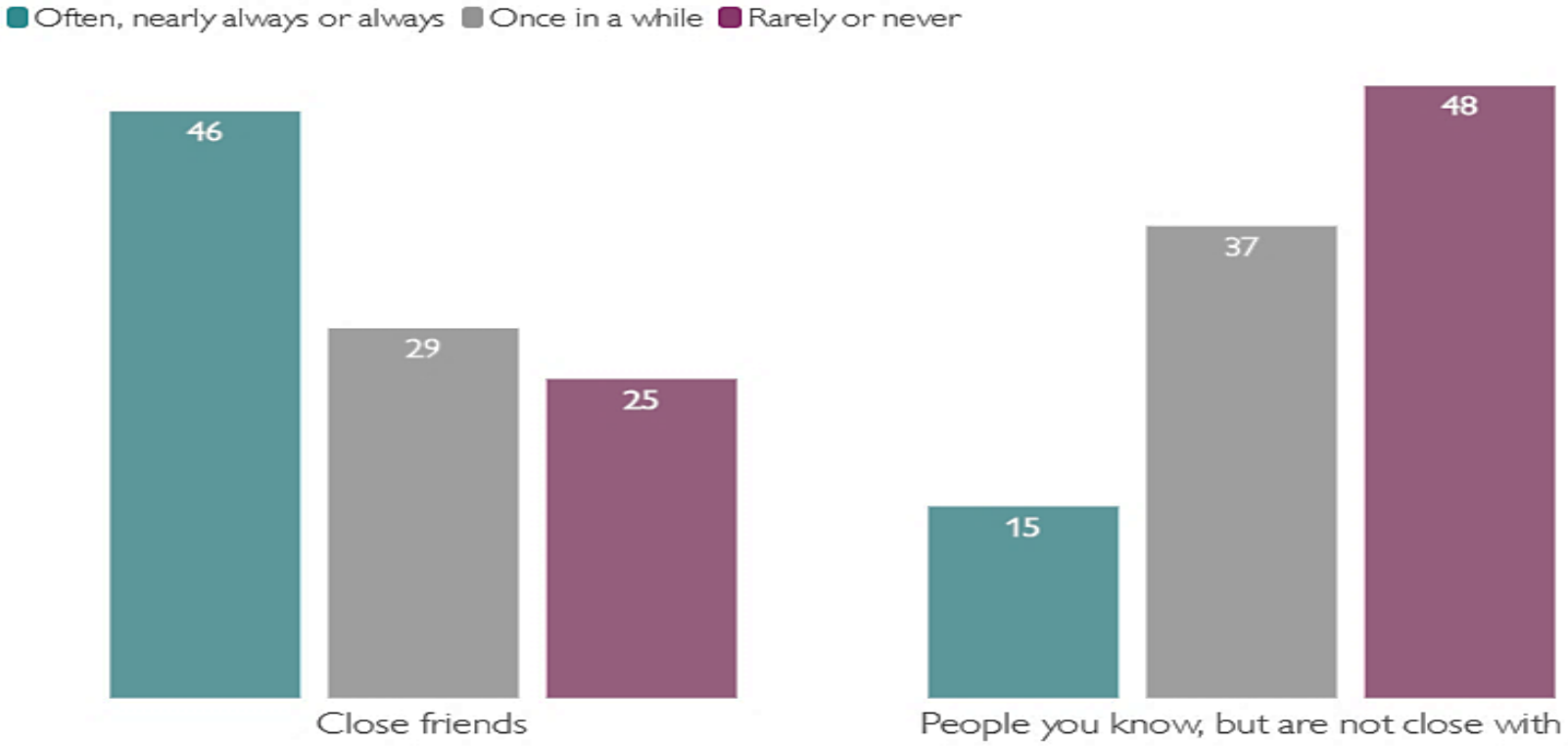
Are We Actually Connecting?



- They reported that
- less than half of American social media users, **46%**, often connect with **close friends** when using social media.
- only **15%** often talk with people **they know but are not close to**.
- **Young passive users** were more likely than active users to say they often **felt there was no one they could trust.**
- **Young active users** were also more likely than passive users to report **spending time with friends in the previous seven days**.

Less than Half of Americans Regularly Engage with Friends on Social Media

Percentage of Americans who say they interact with the following types of people on social media. . .

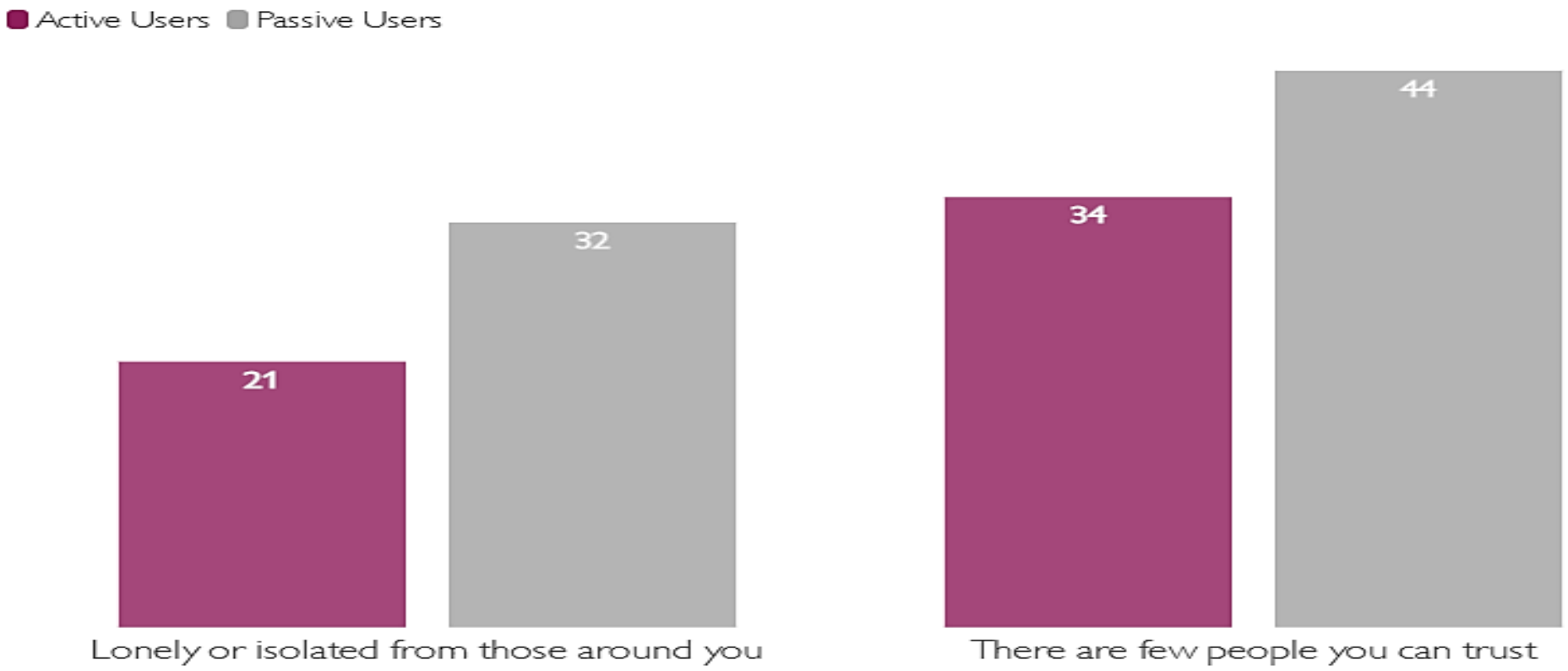


Source: American Gender and Society Survey, 2024.
Note: Survey of US adults ($N = 5,837$). Asked of people who use social media.

Survey Center on American Life

Passive Social Media Users Are More Lonely and Less Trusting

Percentage of young adults (ages 18 to 29) who say they feel. . .



Source: American Gender and Society Survey, 2024.
Note: Survey of US adults ($N = 5,837$). Asked of people who use social media.

Survey Center on American Life

One-Minute Pair Question

- Talk with the person next to you.
- What is one thing you do online that feels active and meaningful?
- What is one thing you do online that feels passive and draining?
- After one minute, we will hear a few examples.



The Scroll Can Feel Social Without Being Social

- Scrolling can give the feeling of being around people.
- The feed is full of faces, voices, stories, opinions, celebrations, and conflicts.
- Yet the user may still be sitting alone.
- They may not be speaking to anyone.
- They may not be heard.
- They may not receive care.
- Questions:
  - How many people do you see online in a typical day?
  - How many people do you truly connect with in a typical day?



Designed to Keep Us There





Many apps are designed to keep users checking, scrolling, reacting, and returning.

Notifications, likes, autoplay, short videos, infinite scroll, and personalized feeds make leaving harder.

A common example:

- A person opens an app to check one message.
- Twenty minutes later, the person has watched videos, read comments, checked news, and forgotten the original reason.
- Familiar?



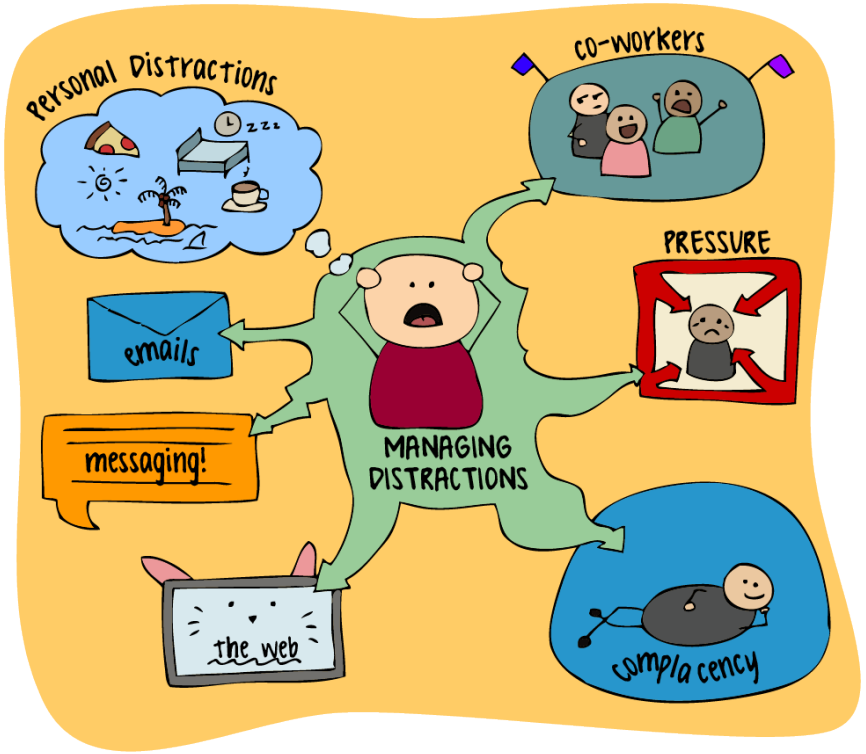
The Digital Slot Machine

- Study: Save your brain a digital survival guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)
- Social media rewards are **unpredictable**.
- A new like, message, comment, or video may appear at any time.
- **This unpredictability keeps the brain checking.**
- It describes how phones and apps push users into checking, scrolling, and frequent task-switching.
- **Even when the phone is silent, face-down, or nearby, it can still invite attention.**
- **The mere presence of a phone can lower concentration and cognitive performance.**

What Pulls You Back Most Often?

Messages?	News?	Videos?
Likes?	Comments?	Shopping?
Curiosity?	Boredom?	Habit?

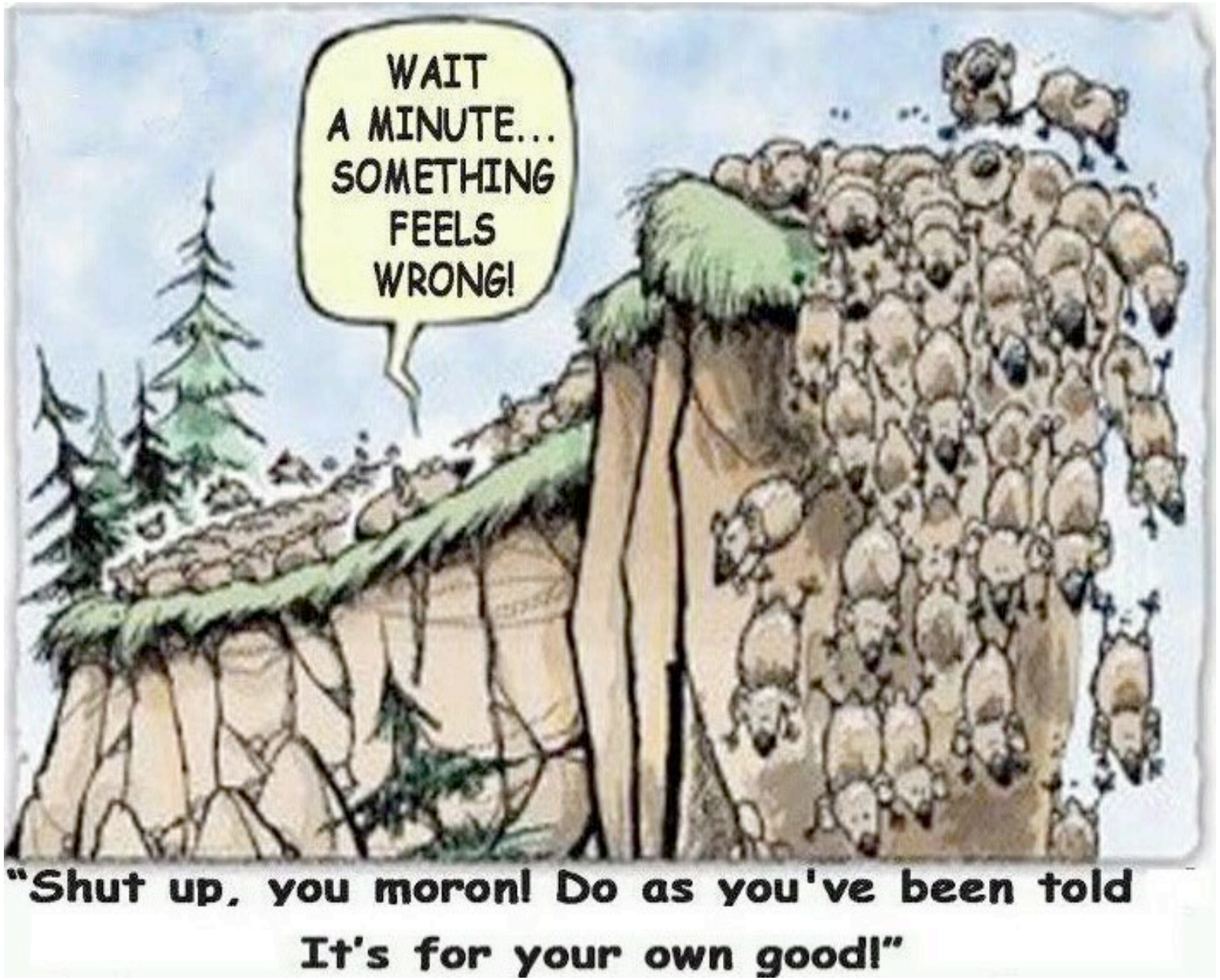
Being Present is Harder Than It Looks



- Have you ever sat with family or friends while your mind kept drifting to your phone?
- Have you ever felt a buzz in your pocket, checked your phone, and found no notification?
- Have you ever tried to read, but your mind kept jumping away?
- These are common signs of a mind trained by constant checking in Save your brain a digital survival guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)

Video: Crowd Behavior and Social Media

- Crowd Behavior Experiment
- People often follow what others do.
- Online trends can make behavior feel normal simply because it is repeated.



This experiment is a powerful example of how mass mentality is formed...



Always think for yourself and never follow the crowd blindly.

Am I Choosing This, or Copying It?



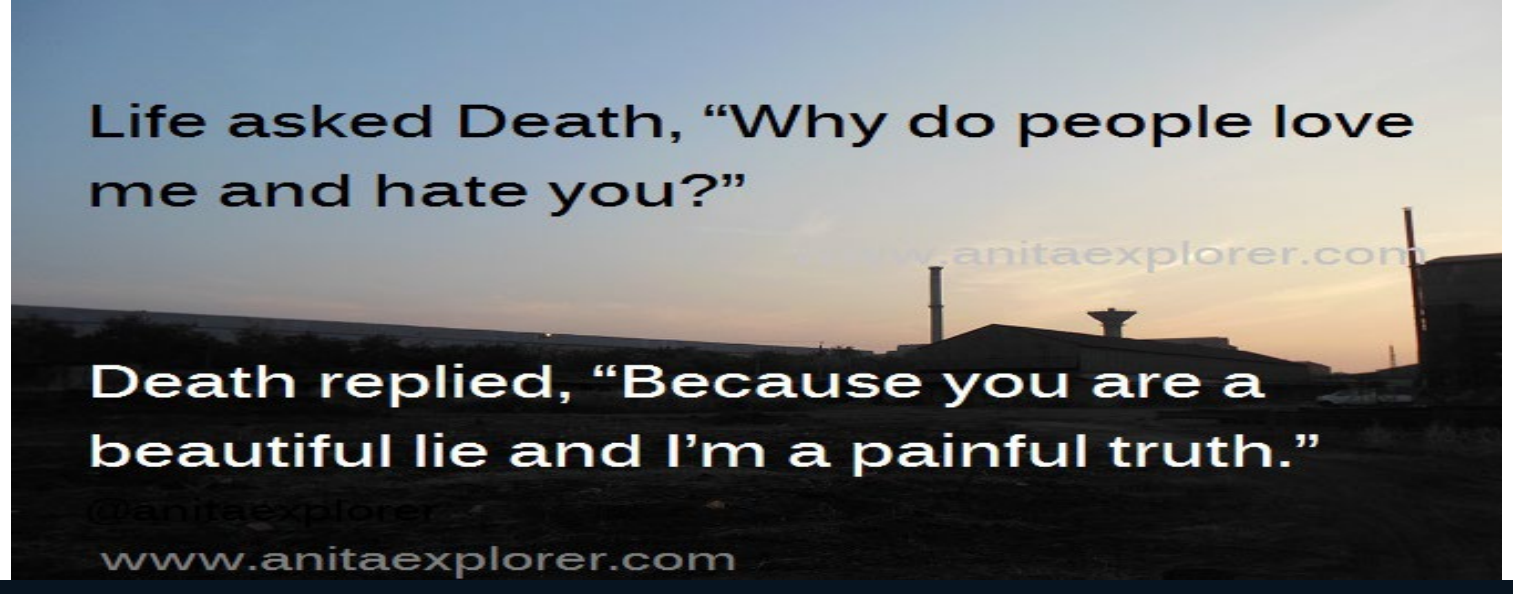
The question is not only: “Is everyone doing this?”

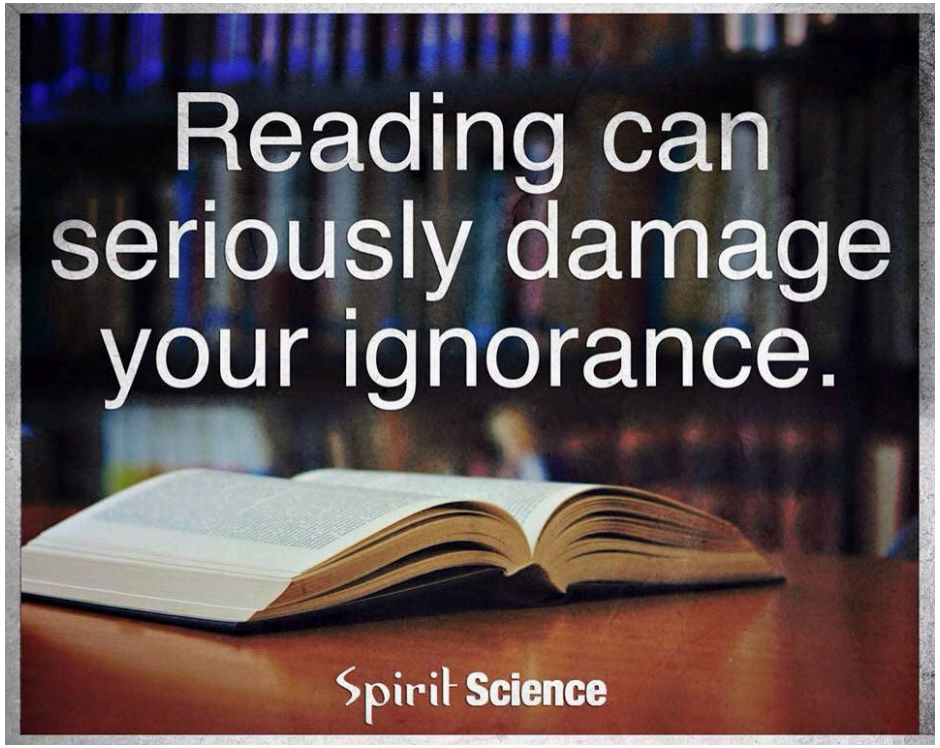
The better question is: “Does this match my values, my health, and my real life?”

Ask before following a trend:

- Am I choosing this, or am I copying it?
- Would I still post this if nobody could like it?
- Would I still watch this if it did not appear in my feed?
- Does this content make me more thoughtful, calmer, and more connected?
- Does this reflect the person I want to be?

The Agreement Nobody Reads





- Terms and Conditions Printed
- Most people click "I agree" because they want to use the app.
- Terms and conditions can be extremely long and difficult to understand.

thishowthingswork

Aphex Twin • #3

Follow

This shows how impossible it would be to actually read all the terms of service on social media apps.





Privacy, Consent, and Power



The issue is not only screen time.



The issue is also data, privacy, consent, and power.



Question: When you click “I agree,” do you feel informed, pressured, or simply tired, or none?

What We Give Away



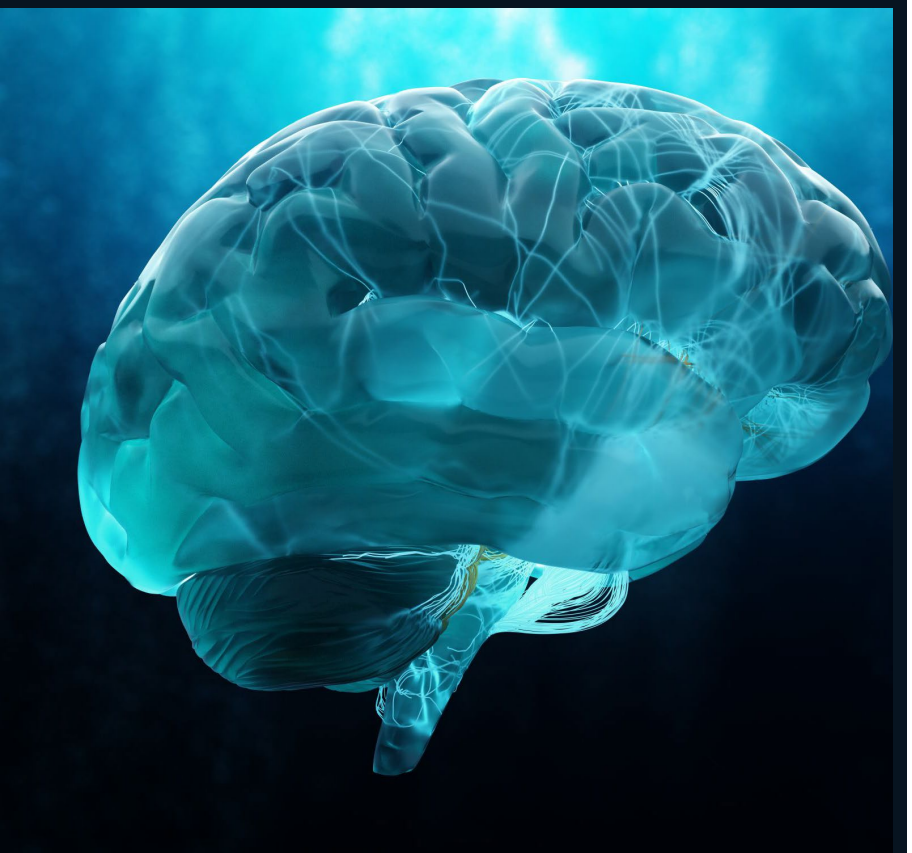
- Platforms may collect information about **what we click, watch, like, share, pause on, search for, and buy**.
- These patterns can reveal **interests, habits, emotions, fears, relationships, locations, and vulnerabilities**.
- Privacy is **NOT** only about **hiding wrongdoing**.
- Privacy is about **dignity, freedom, and not being constantly measured**.

Brain Rot Became a Mainstream Word



- Oxford named “brain rot” as its 2024 Word of the Year. (Oxford University Press, 2024)
- It is defined as a ***supposed decline in a person’s mental or intellectual state, especially from overconsuming trivial or unchallenging online content***.
- Oxford reported a **230% increase** in the use of the term from 2023 to 2024.

What Brain Rot Feels Like

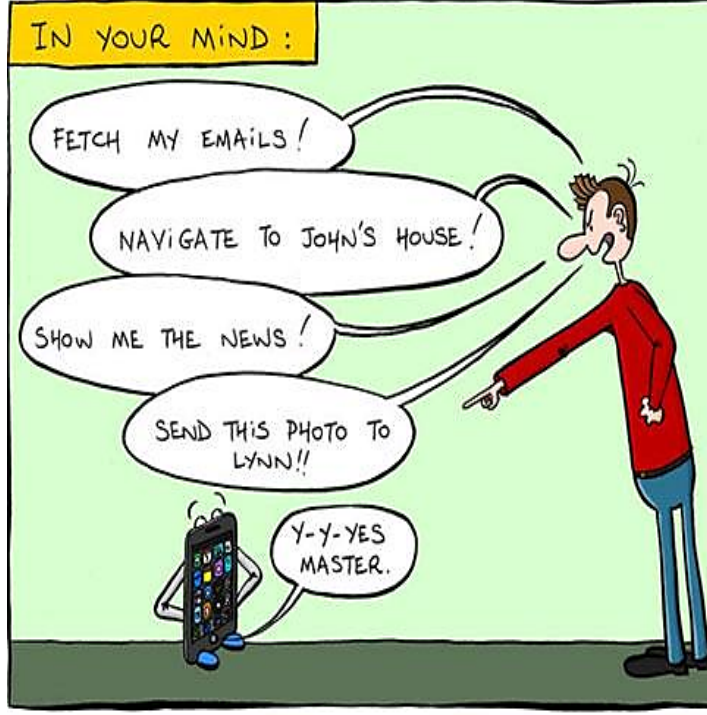


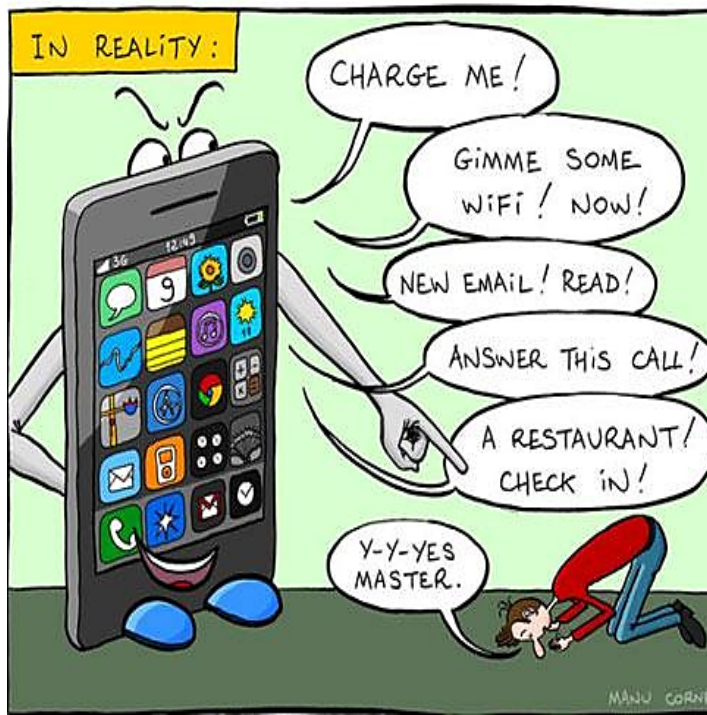
- Brain rot is not used here as a medical diagnosis.
- It is an everyday phrase for a familiar experience.
- It may feel like:
  - Mental fog.
  - Impatience with slow tasks.
  - Reduced attention.
  - Shallow reading.
  - Constant checking.
  - Difficulty staying present.
- It is a decline in **focus, deep thinking, and meaningful engagement caused by constant digital consumption**.

Have You Felt This?

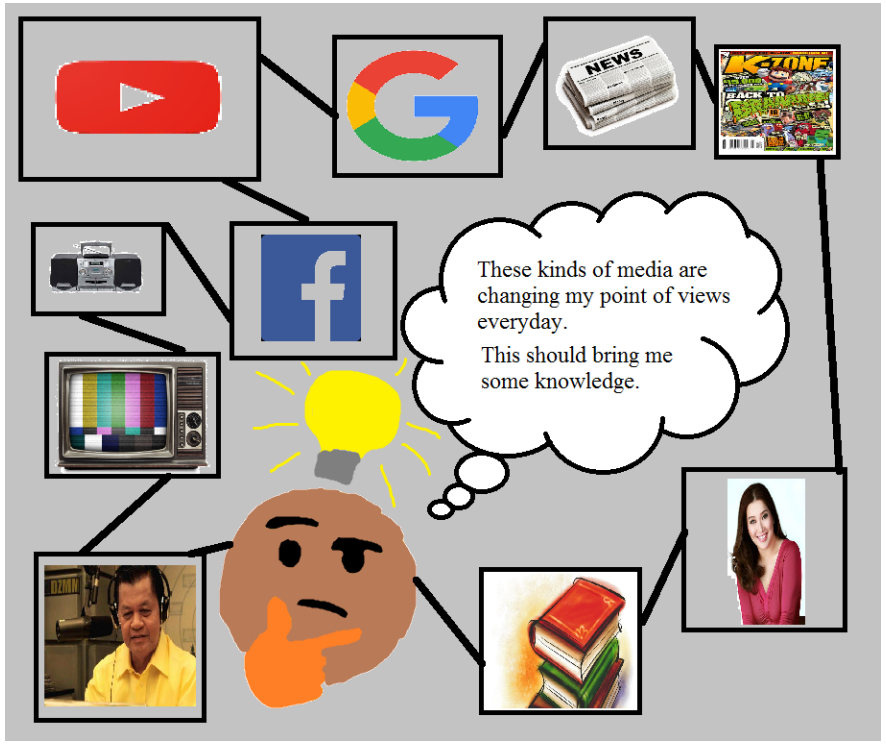


- Have you ever read a paragraph and immediately realized you did not remember it?
- Have you ever opened your phone for one thing and forgotten why?
- Have you ever felt too restless to sit quietly?
- Have you ever checked the same app again even though nothing new happened?
- These moments are small, but they tell us something about attention.





Low-Quality Content Is Growing



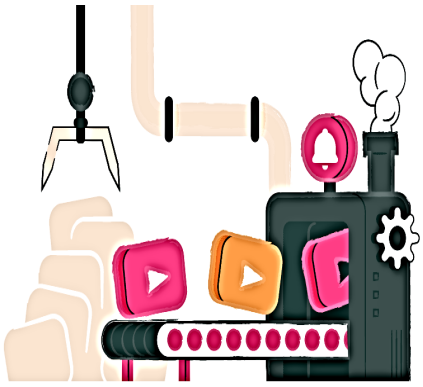
- A Kapwing, 2025 report found that **21% to 33%** of a new YouTube user's feed may consist of **AI slop** or **brain rot** videos.
- **AI slop means low-quality automated content designed mainly to attract views, clicks, and advertising revenue.**
- Low-quality automated content can still get
  - **huge views and**
  - **large advertising revenue.**

The Slop Economy



- Some AI-generated channels reached **billions of views** and **large estimated yearly earnings**.
- The problem is not only that **some content is silly**.
- The deeper problem is that **attention can become more valuable than truth, wisdom, or human creativity**.

Where Do Trending YouTube AI Slop Channels Have the Most Subscribers?



Eight of Spain's top 100 YouTube channels primarily deliver AI slop, defined by the Oxford University Press as "low quality, inauthentic, or inaccurate" content, distributed "in an indiscriminate or intrusive way."

These eight trending channels have a total of **20,216,000** subscribers — more subscribers than the trending AI slop channels of any other country.

TOTAL SUBSCRIBERS OF TRENDING AI CHANNELS

1	Spain	20.22M
2	Egypt	17.91M
3	USA	14.47M
4	Brazil	12.56M
5	Pakistan	11.94M
6	South Korea	11.53M
7	Colombia	10.07M
8	Bangladesh	9.45M
9	Argentina	8.58M
10	Indonesia	8.57M
11	Peru	8.14M
12	India	7.01M
13	Mexico	6.73M
14	Italy	4.64M
15	Vietnam	4.37M
16	France	4.08M
17	Azerbaijan	3.89M
18	Japan	3.77M
19	Netherlands	2.86M
20	Taiwan	2.81M

Methodology: We identified the top 100 trending YouTube channels in every country (on playboard.co) and isolated the trending AI slop channels. We then used socialblade.com to retrieve the number of subscribers for these channels, and ranked countries by the total subscriber count of these trending AI slop channels.

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Repetition Can Feel Like Truth



Repeated exposure can make ideas feel familiar.

Familiar ideas can start to feel true, even when they are weak, exaggerated, or false.

This matters for:

- Health rumors.
- Scams.
- Fear-based news.
- Political anger.
- Miracle products.
- Conspiracy claims.

Before sharing, ask: Did I check this, or did it simply feel familiar?

The Mental Health Concern

The concern is not that every person is harmed by social media.

The concern is that **heavy, passive, late-night, comparison-based, and unregulated use can increase emotional strain**.

Key harms include:

- Mental health strain.
- Comparison and body image pressure.
- Sleep disruption.
- Cyberbullying and harassment.
- Misinformation and fear.
- Reduced attention.
- Less real-world interaction.

The Four Harms Often Discussed for Young People

In the book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* Jonathan Haidt's argument about phone-based childhood highlights four major harms:

- Social deprivation.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Attention fragmentation.
- Addiction.

It connects to **reduced in-person time, reduced sleep, fragmented attention, and addictive design**.

Why this matters for you? Grandparents, parents, teachers, and community members can help younger people rebuild real connection.

Study: What Happens When Phones Are Removed?

- A University of York project connected to Documentary-Swiped: The School that Banned Smartphones on Channel 4 tested smartphone restriction with students.
- They reported that students fell asleep about **20 minutes faster** and got about **one extra hour of sleep** each night during the restriction period.



The Hopeful Lesson from Phone Breaks



- The phone-ban evidence is hopeful.
- Some negative effects may be reversible.
- Sleep can improve.
- Mood can improve.
- Attention may need more time, but the direction is encouraging.
- A small change in the environment can make a real difference.
- Question: What would change if your phone was not the last thing you saw at night and the first thing you touched in the morning?

A 72-Hour Smartphone Break



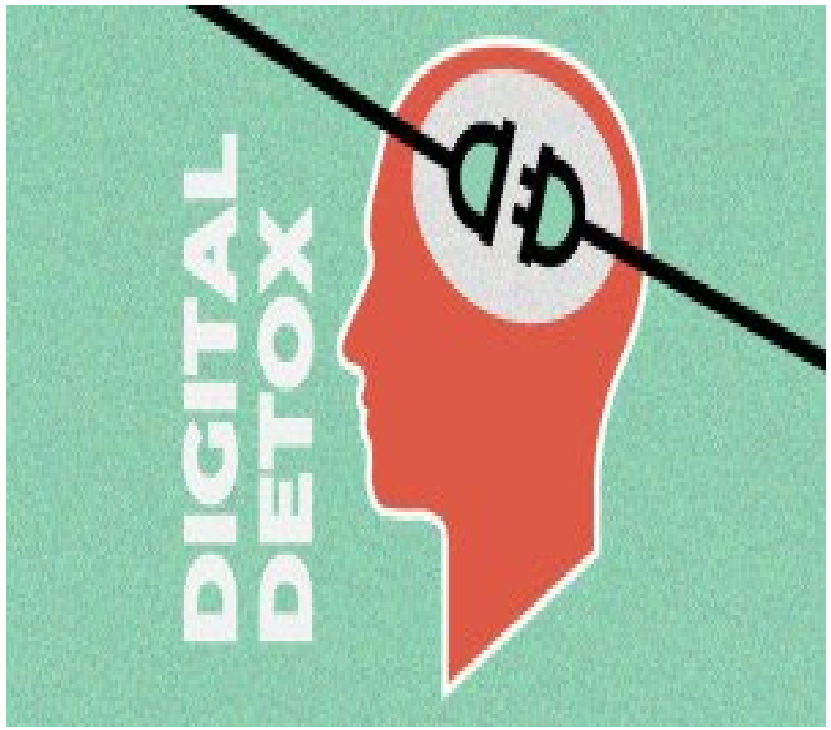
- A 2025 study in Computers in Human Behavior (Schmitgen et al., 2025) examined 72 hours of smartphone restriction in young adult smartphone users.
- The study found changes in brain activity related to **salience, reward processing, and cue-reactivity** after the restriction period.

Could You Try a Phone Break?



- This does not mean every person will feel completely changed after three days.
- It does suggest that the brain responds when smartphone cues are reduced.
- Questions:
  - Could you go 72 hours without your smartphone?
  - Could you go 24 hours?
  - Could you go one evening?
  - Could you start with one phone-free meal?

Deactivating Social Media Can Help Emotional State



- A Stanford-linked working paper(Allcott et al., 2025) studied Facebook and Instagram deactivation in two large randomized experiments before the 2020 U.S. election.
- People who deactivated Facebook for six weeks reported a measurable improvement in an index of happiness, depression, and anxiety.
- Instagram deactivation also showed a smaller measurable improvement. (Results)





A Realistic Lesson from Social Media Breaks

- Quitting social media is not magic.
- Small measurable improvements still matter.
- The goal does not have to be “quit forever.”
- A realistic goal can be:
  - One social-media-free evening.
  - One quiet morning.
  - One weekend with limited checking.
  - Two to four social-media-free days per month.
  - More real-life contact during the time you gain.

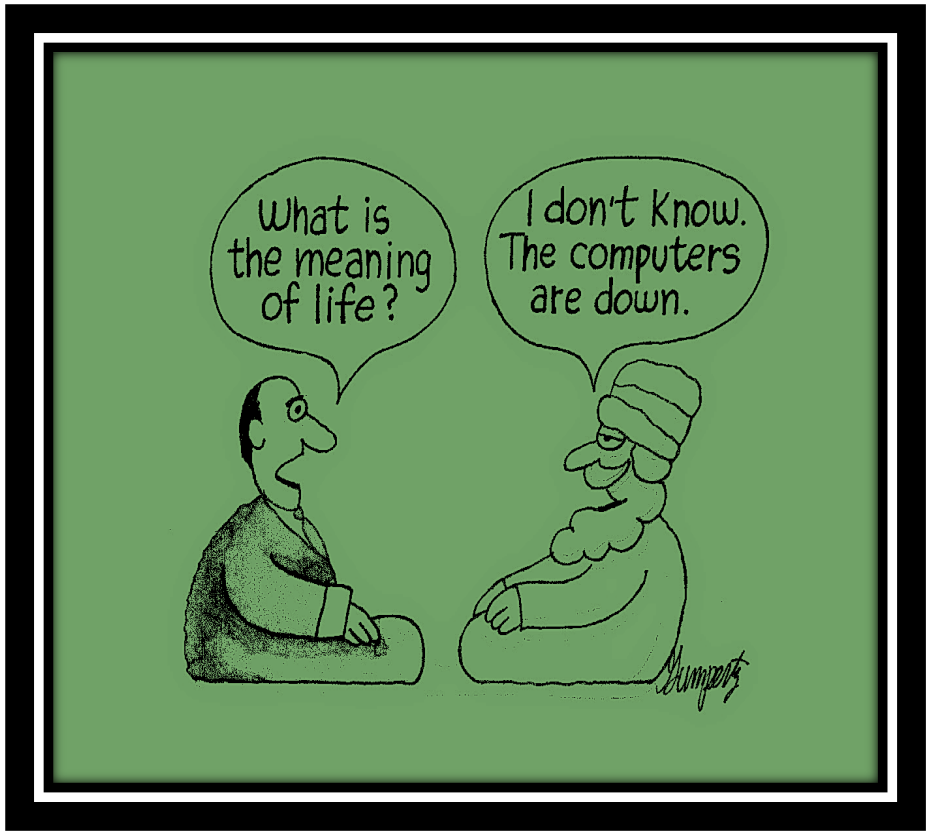
Real Connection Is Not a Luxury: Warm Relationships Protect the Body and the Brain



- The Harvard Study of Adult Development (Mineo, 2017-How to live a healthy and happy life) found
  - **warm relationships** were strongly connected to **longer, happier, and healthier lives**.
  - people with **stronger social support** experienced less **mental decline** as they aged.
  - **real connection** can **reduce stress and help people feel safer, calmer, and more alive**.
- The solution is not simply “use less technology.”
- But:
  - Protect attention.
  - Protect relationships.
  - Use technology to support real connection, not replace it.

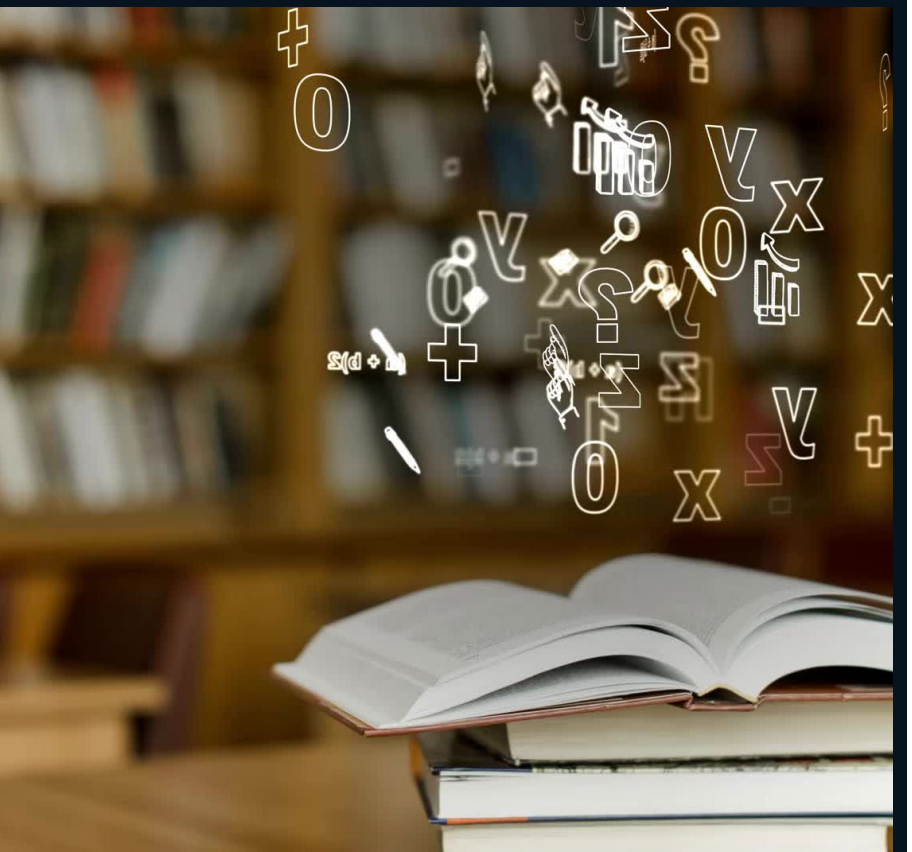
Real Connection Can Be Small





- A warm phone call can matter.
- A shared meal can matter.
- A walk with a friend can matter.
- A conversation after worship, class, volunteering, or a community activity can matter.
- A kind exchange with a neighbor can matter.
- One meaningful conversation can be more nourishing than an hour of scrolling.

Mental Renewal in a Digital Age



- The goal is not complete digital isolation.
- The goal is a more conscious relationship with information.
- Mental renewal begins with recognition.
- Then it requires filtering.
- Then it becomes a regular practice.
- The mind is like a library, a home, a room, an office that needs maintenance.
- Digital life can fill the mind with fragments, noise, misleading content, and shallow interactions.

How to Clear Mental Clutter



- Start with recognition:
  - “My mind feels crowded.”
  - “My attention feels scattered.”
  - “I am consuming too much low-value content.”

How to Clear Mental Clutter



Then practice filtering:

- Unfollow accounts that do not support your wellbeing.
- Mute content that leaves you anxious, angry, or inadequate.
- Set boundaries around social media use.
- Create time for deeper reading, thinking, prayer, conversation, and rest.

Mental renewal is not perfection.

It is regular maintenance.

Six Practical Ways to Take Back Attention



- Keep the phone out of sight during deep conversations, meals, prayer, reading, and rest.
- Keep the phone out of the bedroom when possible.
- Try a small digital break, such as one evening or one morning offline.
- Read hard-copy books to rebuild deep attention.
- Spend daily time alone with your thoughts.
- Unsubscribe from newsletters and alerts that create mental noise.
- Adapted from Save Your Brain, A Digital Survival Guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)

A Small Digital Rest



A digital rest does not have to be a full day.

Start smaller.

- Try one phone-free dinner.
- Try one offline morning.
- Try one walk without music, podcasts, or scrolling.
- Try one evening with the phone in another room.

The point is

- not punishment.
- to remember what your mind feels like without constant interruption.

Adapted from Save Your Brain, A Digital Survival Guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)

Rebuild the Reading Muscle



Printed reading can train attention.

- Start with ten pages.
- Start with a short article.
- Start with a poem, devotional reading, essay, or chapter.

Do not expect the mind to become calm instantly.

Attention comes back through practice.

Adapted from Save Your Brain, A Digital Survival Guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)

Spend Time Alone With Your Thoughts



A quiet mind may feel uncomfortable at first.

That does not mean quiet is bad.

It may mean the mind has become used to constant stimulation.

Try ordinary quiet moments:

- Wash dishes without a video.
- Walk without headphones.
- Wait in line without checking the phone.
- Sit after a meal without opening an app.
- Let the mind breathe.

Adapted from Save Your Brain, A Digital Survival Guide (Magness & Stulberg, 2025)

The One-Week Challenge



Choose one small experiment for this week.

- No phone at meals.
- No phone in the bedroom.
- One social-media-free evening.
- One walk without phone, music, or podcast.
- Call one person instead of only liking their post.
- Unfollow or mute accounts that leave you anxious, angry, or inadequate.
- Read ten pages of a printed book before checking the phone.

At the end of the week, ask:

- Did I feel calmer?
- Did I sleep better?
- Did I connect with someone more meaningfully?
- Did I miss anything important?

Better Questions for Healthier Use



- What did I come here to do?
- Did I connect with someone or only consume content?
- Do I feel better or worse after using this app?
- Is this helping my relationships?
- Is this helping my sleep?
- Is this helping my mind stay clear?
- Would a phone call, visit, walk, prayer, or quiet moment be better right now?

Hope for the Future



- Social media does not have to control us.
- Technology should serve human life, not replace it.
- A healthier digital future is possible when people use tools with intention, protect attention, value privacy, and choose real connection.
- The goal is not to use technology less in every situation.
- The goal is to use it better.
- The digital wellness is empowerment, not restriction.


okscape.ai
0:
THE KNOWLEDGE WITHIN


HELP

Discussion Question 1



When has social media helped you feel truly connected?

Examples:

- A family update.
- A message from an old friend.
- A support group.
- A community event.
- A useful video.
- A shared memory.
- A prayer request or encouragement.

Discussion Question 2



When has social media made you feel distracted, worried, left out, irritated, or disconnected?

Examples:

- Too much news.
- Family conflict online.
- Comparison.
- Scams.
- Late-night scrolling.
- Feeling ignored.
- Seeing everyone’s life look better than yours.

Discussion Question 3



What is one digital habit you would like to change this week?

Examples:

- I will not check the phone first thing in the morning.
- I will call someone instead of only liking their post.
- I will remove one app from my home screen.
- I will stop keeping the phone beside my bed.
- I will avoid social media before sleep.
- I will stop sharing posts before checking them.

Final Reflection



Social media can be a window, a bridge, a marketplace, a stage, a trap, or a tool.

The difference often depends on how we use it, how long we use it, and whether it leads us back to real life.

Ask yourself:

- What is one thing I want my phone to stop doing to me?
- What is one thing I want my phone to help me do better?

Let technology help you connect.

Do not let it quietly replace connection.

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Videos and visual materials

- *Social Media Timeline.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufGrHH77Is0
- *Most Popular Social Media Epic Battle 2004–2025.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cxhao8e-p8
- *How and Where People Spend Their Time 1930–2024.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ptAUia6s10
- Instagram crowd manipulation experiment. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIiwiZrsA68/?igsh=dDhscjM2YnRoNGt2
- Printed social media terms and conditions art piece. https://www.instagram.com/p/DJAWOCrON_z/?img_index=4&igsh=MWxsczZrN3cyMHd6dw==
- Instagram resource on 72-hour smartphone break. https://www.instagram.com/p/DKhTUS8t4tD/?img_index=8&igsh=MWpiM2ZtcGF6N2d5Mw%3D%3D
- Instagram resource on social media breaks and emotional health. https://www.instagram.com/p/DRCohD2DJVR/?img_index=1&igsh=NmQ5a3hoaHI3Nzcw