

Distracted Teens?

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When you see teenagers today seemingly engrossed in their mobile phones, you are most likely thinking that they are living in their own virtual existence with no sense of reality or any care for what is happening around them.

The phone that they are so distracted by has access to:

- more information than can be found in most libraries;
- the latest news in real time, and;
- can connect them with people from all over the world.

If anything, young people are more likely to be discussing global issues on their phone. We worry about the world we are inheriting and, collectively, we are taking it upon ourselves to do something about it. The most famous examples of young people leading this collective effort are Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai and Japan's own Sadako Sasaki. Their stories have been shared on social media getting support from millions of people across the globe.

Greta Thunberg fears that the world is in crisis and may not survive. She gained global recognition when she decided to camp outside the Swedish parliament, demanding they do more about climate change. As a result of her determination and persistence, she was invited to address the United Nations climate change conference. Her speech inspired young people from across the world to take action and protest against climate change to their governments.

When Malala Yousafzai was 11 years old, she started a blog under an alias to document the human rights violations taking place under Taliban rule. When she was 15, she was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman in an attempt to stop her from speaking out. Malala was treated in the United Kingdom for her injuries where the world learned about her story through the international media.

Instead of slowing down or stopping what she was doing, Malala stepped up her efforts to force change and promote female education across the world. She co-authored an international best-selling book about her story and founded a charity to fund education programs for girls. In 2014, at the age of 17, Malala was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts.

Japan's own Sadako Sasaki, an innocent victim of the nuclear blast over Hiroshima was not an activist. She made a thousand origami cranes in the hope that she would be granted a wish. Her story captured the hearts of millions of people around the world and she became the symbol of the innocent victims of nuclear warfare.

Even today, origami cranes are folded by children all over the world as a powerful symbol of nuclear disarmament and peace. There is also an annual conference in Hiroshima and Nagasaki attended by thousands of activists and children to fight for a nuclear-free world.

These are just 3 examples of children who have made a global impact, but there are hundreds of thousands more who are passionate about issues important to them and are doing what they can to raise awareness and fight for their cause.

I can tell you that my friends and I often have long discussions about global issues like politics, conflict and the environment, and how they effect us and our world. We may just be kids, but our generation is more informed and connected than any generation before because of the tools and technology at our disposal.

So, when you see teenagers distracted by their mobile devices and seemingly disconnected from the world around them, please spare a thought...

...They may be in the process of saving the world!