Nina Mckind 8-18
West Park Writers
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Online Oasis

Sometimes I get lost in my phone. Or my ipad, or my laptop. Social media always seems to swallow me whole. I get a notification, I open an app, then I open another app and another and another. Before you know it I've been on my phone for 4 and a half hours and my screen time average is through the roof. It always seems to draw me in somehow in a minor, innocent way and then once I've taken the bait the metaphorical trap is shut tight and I'm mindlessly banging on the walls to get out. It's starting to take a toll on my health. Whatever I see on the screen alters my thoughts, how I see myself, or how I see others. I've even missed meals just because I had to catch up on what my favorite influencer did or ate that day. I'd never think that it was so addicting but now I know, firsthand, that the internet really can be a drug.

This morning when I woke up to my mother calling my name the first thing I did after I opened my eyes and sat up was look at my phone, and sure enough a row of notifications had cascaded down my screen just as I pressed the home button. I searched them, clicking aimlessly at each one. By the time I was finished I had already missed the bus and more importantly my opportunity for breakfast. I didn't think it was a big deal until my friends started commenting on it and my number of missing assignments multiplied. It was like any other addiction or disease and I had to rid myself of it.

So in efforts to bring down my screen time average I set a timer everyday for one week and when it went off I would have to set down my phone and obtain from online activity for the rest of the day. The first time was the hardest. My hand felt empty without a device in it, my eyes lost without their usual bright, enticing vision of the screen. I sat there motionless and contemplating what to do to fill this never-ending space of complete boredom. *Homework?* I thought. It didn't occur to me that I could use this time to be of all things...*productive*, but I was. I finished all my homework, ate dinner, and although it was a struggle to fall asleep without my headphones in and the latest episode of my favorite show playing, I managed.

By the end of the week I had lessened my online activity drastically. At first, it felt like I was losing touch with my interweb reality, but I replaced that feeling with decent grades and new, found knowledge of the world around me. Before I went to bed I checked my screen time average. I was at the edge of my seat, my eyes closed to discover if I had succeeded or plummeted into what I hoped was not a lost cause. I opened my eyes and saw the numbers in front of me. It had decreased 6 hours and 37 minutes! I felt healthier and more connected to the world around me rather than the "world wide web."