

**TEXT 1****The Meaning of Life – Who Cares?**

By Emily O'Neil

- 1 Recently, I helped co-ordinate several events that required almost all of my coworkers' and my time. We worked long hours, often until around 1 a.m. On one particularly exhausting day, as we completed the ninth hour of work, a friend asked me an unexpected question: What is the meaning of life, and why are we, as humans, here? At first, I was taken aback – after all, it was late. But his question sparked a brief, meaningful conversation that stayed with me.
- 2 Initially, I thought his question was absurd. Discussing existential topics at midnight wasn't something I had anticipated. However, looking back, I'm glad he asked. For me, the meaning of life isn't about finding a single, clear answer. Instead, it's about living fully – creating, experiencing, and embracing moments. Trying too hard to define life's purpose can take away from the experience of living itself. Life is not a puzzle to solve but a journey to explore, with its richness found in its unpredictability.
- 3 Many people take the idea of the 'meaning of life' literally, searching for ways to live purposefully. Society often tells us that our lives must have an obvious, measurable meaning to be valuable. This idea pressures individuals to find answers, creating unrealistic expectations about what a meaningful life looks like. Self-help books and popular culture frequently offer simplified steps to fulfilment, as if purpose can be universally applied. However, by over-analysing life, we risk losing its complexity and beauty.
- 4 An article I read recently suggests evaluating life to find meaning. While this idea might work for some, I find it oversimplified. Life's meaning cannot be reduced to a formula or checklist. The article concludes with a curious statement: 'don't search too hard for meaning'. This raises an important question: why are we so determined to search for something that might not need defining? Can't we simply exist without constantly questioning our purpose?
- 5 Reflecting on my friend's question, I realised that discussing the meaning of life is more about exploring perspectives than finding absolute truths. These conversations reveal how people view the world and their place in it. Still, I question the belief that life must have one overarching purpose. The idea that a life without a clear goal is somehow incomplete seems flawed. Often, purpose and happiness come naturally when we live authentically, rather than being goals to pursue obsessively.
- 6 Positive psychology suggests that meaning can be found in all kinds of experiences – from the extraordinary to the ordinary. What gives one person purpose may mean little to someone else. This diversity of meaning is natural and beautiful, but societal expectations often make us question our worth based on external standards. These pressures can overshadow the individuality that makes life so special.

- 7 Consider how different people find meaning in their daily lives. To one person, fulfilment might come from raising a family, while another might feel most alive while travelling the world. A third might find purpose in creating art, while someone else takes pride in contributing to their community. These examples highlight the variety in human existence and the futility of trying to fit everyone's life into a single framework of purpose. Life is inherently diverse, and that diversity is what makes it meaningful. Meaning, like beauty, is subjective. It can't be defined by a set of rules or measured by others. Trying to create a universal definition for the meaning of life takes away from its individuality and richness. Life's beauty lies in its variety and the unique ways we all find purpose.
- 8 It's also important to acknowledge that meaning can change over time. What matters to us when we're teenagers may differ vastly from what we value in our 30s, 50s, or beyond. As we grow, our experiences shape our perspectives, and the things that bring us fulfilment evolve. This flexibility further highlights the futility of pinning down a single, definitive 'meaning of life'. Instead of chasing permanence, we should embrace the idea that meaning is dynamic and deeply personal.
- 9 One of the most extraordinary aspects of being human is our diversity – our unique skills, interests, and values. A meaningful life doesn't depend on societal approval but on staying true to our own passions and goals.
- 10 While I enjoy thinking about questions like my friend's, I don't believe life needs a clear purpose to be meaningful. Letting ideas about purpose define our choices can limit the joy and richness of simply living. Maybe there is a deeper reason we're here but dwelling on it too much can take away from the experiences that make life special.
- 11 Ultimately, we spend far too much time focusing on the 'why' of life instead of the 'how'. Life isn't about finding an answer; it's about living the questions. We should allow ourselves the freedom to explore, to make mistakes, to grow, and to change. It's time to stop worrying about what life should mean and focus on living it – freely, fully, and unapologetically.

[Adapted from: <<https://pittnews.com/article/182049/opinions/opinion-the-meaning-of-life-who-cares/>>]

**TEXT 2A**

**Smartphones in South African schools**

Smartphones in schools are under scrutiny in South Africa as evidence grows linking excessive screen time to declining mental and physical health among teens. This awareness has placed schools at the forefront of efforts to establish smartphone-free environments.

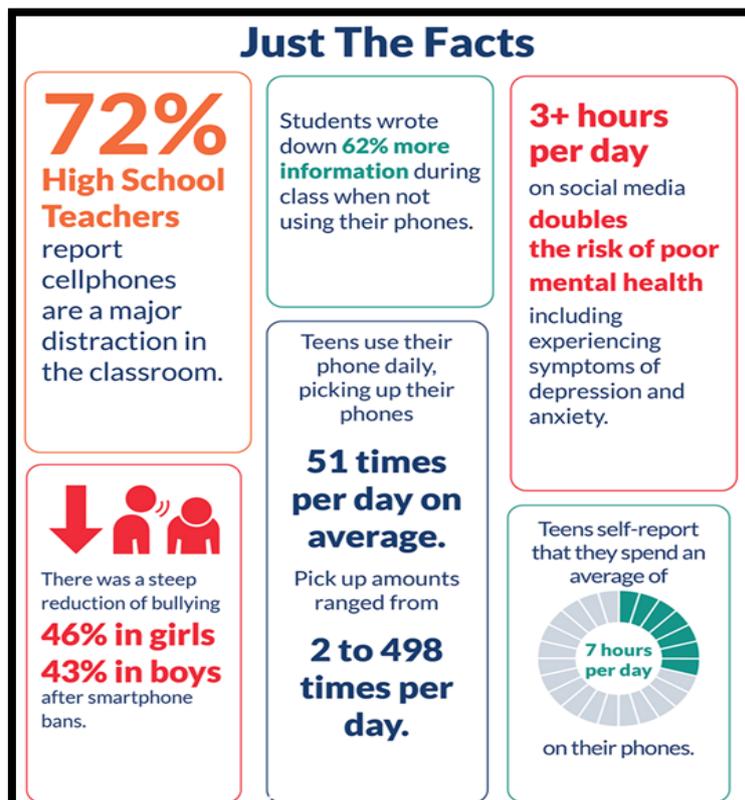
Jonathan Haidt, author of *'The Anxious Generation'*, highlights the issue of overprotecting children in the physical world while leaving them exposed online. He advocates for no smartphones before high school, no social media before age 16, phone-free schools, and more opportunities for real-world independence and free play.

Globally, many countries have implemented policies banning smartphones in classrooms. Results show improved focus, reduced bullying, and better academic performance.

Some South African schools are implementing phone-free policies. These efforts have led to reduced social media drama, increased focus, and greater engagement in activities like reading, crafts, and face-to-face communication. Additionally, educators have noted the importance of modelling digital boundaries to support students in forming healthier habits. While technology remains essential in education, balancing its use is critical.

[Adapted from: <<https://www.educationtoday.co.za//smartphones-in-schools-in-south-africa-coming-under-the-spotlight/>>]

**TEXT 2B**



[Adapted from: <<https://www.research-shows-the-negative-impact-cell-phones-and-social-media-have-on-children/>>]

**TEXT 2C**

The infographic is titled "PHONE POLICY" in large white letters on a green background, with the subtitle "EMBRACE OR LIMIT?" below it. It features two columns of text boxes. The left column, on a green background, lists five points with checkmarks, representing the "Embrace" side. The right column, on a yellow background, lists five points with 'X' marks, representing the "Limit" side. At the top, there are two illustrations: a teacher on the left and a student on the right.

Embrace (Pros)	Limit (Cons)
STUDENTS PHONE USE IS MONITORED BY TEACHERS	ADDICTION TO A SMARTPHONE HAS BECOME PREVALENT
OPPORTUNITY TO EARN TRUST IN A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	SCHOOLS SHOULD BE A PLACE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION
PHONES CAN BE A POWERFUL LEARNING TOOL	CAN HARM GRADES IF USED IN THE CLASSROOM
STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN RESPONSIBLY AND SELF-CONTROL	RESTRICTING CAN HELP STUDENTS STAY FOCUSED
CAN BE USED TO COMMUNICATE IN EMERGENCY SITUATION	RESTRICTING CAN HELP STUDENTS INTERACT

[Adapted from: <<https://oakparktalon.org/14469/opinion/eye-2-eye-phone-policy-on-campus/>>]



**TEXT 4A****Call Of Nature<sup>1</sup>**

Wendy Bureau

Fog blankets the desolate earth  
 With motionless, invisible arms  
 Concealing any imperfections  
 Of Nature's poised<sup>2</sup> beauty and charm

A vapor mist of moisture 5  
 Dampens foliage with care  
 Gentle as the sweetest kiss  
 On tender lips, so fair

A necessity of plantations growth  
 Sipping wetness of various form 10  
 Absorbing like a starving sponge  
 During the calm before the storm

A miracle of unspoken prayer  
 From crying clouds, does fall  
 Saturating dirt and root 15  
 Soaked, satisfied, Nature's call

[Source: <<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/call-of-nature/>>]

**Glossary:**

<sup>1</sup>Call Of Nature: This poem reflects the harmony and nourishment of nature.

<sup>2</sup>poised: having a calm and self-assured manner



TEXT 5A

# EMPOWER, RESCUE, RESTORE

Sunitha Krishnan's Crusade Against Human Trafficking



**Sunitha Krishnan** is a fearless activist who has dedicated her life to fighting against human trafficking. Her work shines as a guiding light for survivors, igniting a spark of hope across society.



## #societyunites

Inspires and brings people together against all the issues and differences that break society apart.



To be part of this initiative register yourself as a volunteer on [societyunites.com](https://www.societyunites.com)

[Source: <<https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/recognizing-and-promoting-heroes>>]

**TEXT 5B**



 **Canadian  
Human  
Trafficking  
Hotline**

# Your job shouldn't be your jail

As a migrant worker in Canada, you have the right to come and go freely and speak with loved ones back home.

No one should ever control where you go or who you talk to. If this is happening to you, we are here to help.

**If your freedom is restricted, call 1-833-900-1010**

**Every call is confidential and free of charge.**



[Source: <[https://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CHTH\\_F4.pdf](https://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CHTH_F4.pdf)>]

TEXT 5C

A poster with a black background. At the top, the text '80%' is written in large white font. Below it, there are two rows of stylized human icons. The first row consists of 10 icons: 5 blue (representing males) and 5 pink (representing females). The second row consists of 10 pink icons (representing females). To the right of the icons, the text 'of victims are' is written in white, followed by the word 'FEMALE' in large, bold, white capital letters. At the bottom left, the words 'Human Trafficking' are written in a large, stylized font, with 'Human' in blue and 'Trafficking' in pink. At the bottom right, there is a white text box containing the text: 'Human Trafficking is one of the world largest crime against humanity. Yet it goes unnoticed by the majority of society.' Below this text is the logo for 'LOVE146' with the tagline 'FOR CHILDREN, WOMEN, & VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING'.

[Source: <<https://www.behance.net/gallery/3387001/Human-Trafficking-Public-Awareness-Campaign-Poster/modules/45460743>>]

**TEXT 5D**

# NOT FOR SALE



Every day, millions are trafficked – forced into labor, sexual exploitation, or domestic servitude. It happens in factories, on the streets, behind closed doors – even in your own community. Traffickers exploit vulnerability. But awareness is power.

**Don't look away. Report the signs. Raise your voice.**

**NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE; 1-888-373-7888**

Learn the signs  Be the change  Share you voice

**TEXT 6**

**Oxford Word of the Year: '*Brain Rot*'**

The Oxford Word of the Year is '*brain rot*', defined as 'the supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially due to over-consumption of material (now particularly online content) considered insignificant'.

The term first appeared in 1854 in Henry David Thoreau's '*Walden*', where he critiques society's preference for simple ideas over complex, thought-provoking ones, linking this to a broader decline in intellectual effort. In the digital era, '*brain rot*' has recovered and regained its significance, particularly on platforms like TikTok among Gen Z and Gen Alpha, reflecting societal concerns about the impact of over-consuming low-value online content. 5

Today, '*brain rot*' is used to mockingly describe both the cause and effect of this phenomena: the low-quality content found online and the perceived harm it has on individuals and society. It has also become part of online culture, often used humorously or self-deprecatingly. Viral content like Alexey Gerasimov's *Skibidi Toilet* series and '*only in Ohio*' memes exemplify this, with '*brain rot language*' emerging from these trends. Terms like '*skibidi*' (nonsensical) and '*Ohio*' (weird or embarrassing) showcase how viral culture shapes offline language. 10  
15

The popularity of '*brain rot*' highlights society's growing focus on the interplay between virtual lives and real-world identity. Its adoption by younger generations – those both consuming and creating digital content – reveal a cheeky, self-aware perspective on the very culture it critiques, reflecting broader concerns about technologies role in modern life. 20

[Adapted from: <[>\]](https://corp.oup.com/news/brain-rot-named-oxford-word-of-the-year-2024/#:~:text=Following%20a%20public%20vote%20in,2024%20is%20'brain%20rot)