

# 'Screenagers'

## How does the digital age shape your life?

*"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology."* – Carl Sagan

When I first read about the award-winning documentary film "Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age," my first response was – what a great new word to describe teenagers because everyone knows that teenagers are obsessed with their digital devices 24/7.

The film, produced last year, won Special Recognition at the 2016 Stony Brook Film Festival.

But when I watched the film last month, shown at First Church of Nashua, I realized that the



**D. QUINCY WHITNEY**

term refers to all of us – not just the younger generation. Still, the younger generation is obsessed with the digital age in ways we cannot yet fully grasp, largely

because most school-age children have not known a life without cell phones, tablets and computers – so awareness is imbedded beneath the surface of the conscious mind.

According to a recent report by Common Sense Media, teens spend about nine hours a day online. The film opens with the statistics that teens spend an average of five to six hours a day looking at screens, not including homework.

The film came about when award-winning documentary film director Delaney Ruston, a primary care physician, began to wrestle with digital-age questions when her daughter turned 13 and wanted a smart phone.

According to the CNN "Being

13" study, the teen-screen obsession is due to the needs and desires of teenagers to "monitor their own popularity status, and defend themselves against those who challenge it on social media" – a reality that often leads to constant vigilance that only exacerbates stress and anxiety. On the plus side, digital devices provide convenience for teens in communication about school, social events and interaction with peers.

So what's a parent to do?

The film highlights that the first step to a more balanced approach to screen time – awakening awareness of habits that are so unconscious, they can seem invisible.

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