Technology and the internet is changing how our memory works. Information like phone numbers, appointments, and friend’s birthdays has been completely relegated to our phones, via contact lists, calendars, and Facebook. As a little kid I knew my friend’s home phone numbers by heart; I didn’t have a phone to put their numbers in. I could spit out my friend’s birthdays if you asked. Though most appointments were simply written down on a physical calendar. This relegation of memories has always existed; just like how a boss can ask a secretary about upcoming appointments, we trust other people or mediums to remember things for us.

Our phones, and really the entire internet, has become that “Secretary”, meaning we don’t have to remember much of anything. Our phone knows when to wake us up in the morning; it shows us where we have to be, who has contacted us, and, if we tell it to, can even tell us who we need to contact throughout the day. The advantage is clear to the people using it: why should they bother to remember things when their phone can remind them instead? They have no chance of forgetting or missing an appointment; it seems like a win-win: less work, more consistency. There are, of course, a few problems. If your phone becomes unavailable for one reason or another, like if it gets lost, dies, or is broken, you have no chance of getting to anything because you didn’t remember them.

Not only does technology make us lazier with remembering things, the constant distraction of the internet at large rewires our brains, making them move at a faster pace, with less attention to any one task. The result of this, of course, is worsened memories. People who rely on technology have brains that operate slightly differently than those who aren’t; they tend to have more “senior moments,” and forget to common, everyday tasks. This phenomenon goes past the internet and phones; when people go to museums and focus only on taking pictures, they are less able to describe the works of art they looked at. Their brains instead let the camera do the remembering for them.

I can say definitively that I am afflicted by this. I mean look at me, I forgot to submit this by the Tuesday deadline. I have since set a bi-weekly alarm on my phone to remind me to write my blog post, but I can’t help but think the entire situation only proves my point. As much as most of us don’t want to admit it, our minds have been affected by the technology we use. Many ways we use it are beneficial to our everyday lives, but we need to take good care to notice the negative side effects as well.