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Is Artificial Intelligence Replacing Your Intelligence?

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Three ways to stave off collective stupidity.

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We should be afraid of collective stupidity. What I am referring to is millions of people displaying a lack of intelligence, particularly in areas where humans have made intelligence breakthroughs in the past.

Think of common school subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic. We are collectively more intelligent in these areas today than centuries ago, but many of us are slipping back in time despite being surrounded by modern technology.

How is it happening? Artificial intelligence is replacing or competing with human intelligence. It's called cognitive offloading. We are outsourcing part of our intelligence to technology. When this happens, our own intelligence atrophies. If this plays out over

several generations, some foundational intelligence will be lost for most humans.

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Bob High, Chief Technology Officer of IBM Watson, puts it this way: “Our tools tend to be most valuable when they’re amplifying us, when they’re extending our reach, when they’re increasing our strength, when they’re allowing us to do things that we can’t do by ourselves as human beings.”

Artificial intelligence often replaces real intelligence.

A common example today is spelling. With the emergence of spell-check in Microsoft Word, auto-correct or voice-to-text in iMessage and auto-complete in Google, many of us use artificial intelligence to replace (not augment) our own intelligence. [Words like beautiful, pneumonia, schedule and appreciate are frequently misspelled](#). We simply don’t know how to spell them correctly.

A common example in the future could be audible machine-based language translation. The promise of this advancement in artificial intelligence is that we’ll be able to speak into a device that instantly translates and vocalizes our words into any language we want. That sounds amazing, right? That depends whether we use the artificial intelligence to replace our own intelligence. This AI shouldn’t be an excuse for humans to stop learning other languages. Instead, it should be an opportunity to for us to reach more people around the globe or increase the speed with which critical messages are disseminated.

AI is an incredible tool when it’s applied correctly. When we use

artificial intelligence to augment our own intelligence, our skills are amplified but remain intact. It's sometimes called intelligence amplification (IA). For example, augmented vision is a concept of layering data on top of what we already see. Think of real-time Yelp reviews in your line of sight when you walk in front of a café. It doesn't replace our underlying vision.

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Three ways to keep your real intelligence intact.

Here are three simple ways to ensure your real intelligence isn't entirely replaced by artificial intelligence anytime soon.

1. Practice math without a calculator.

A calculator can be a time-saver, but it's not meant to replace our ability to do math. If you're using a calculator or other mathematical tools as a crutch, try multiplication and division by hand. What is 286 multiplied by 9? Or 142,500 divided by 4,655?

Our ability to do basic math will ensure we don't forget how to calculate a tip, validate the total amount on an invoice or bill or convert teaspoons to tablespoons when cooking.

2. Drive to your next appointment without GPS assistance.

Google Maps and Waze are pervasive today. These apps are standard operating procedure for Uber or Lyft drivers. The intelligent applications are meticulously plotting out each left and right turn, and updating routes in real-time. If you're using this form of AI each time you get from Point A to Point B, try looking at the

route on a map and then navigating to the destination on your own.

Reading maps and navigating from one place to another builds spatial reasoning skills (i.e., seeing with our mind's eye). In contrast, GPS systems allow us to follow directions without assembling a picture of where we've been.

3. Get a free brain test and re-test periodically.

The irony is that in the pursuit of technological advancement, we may actually lower our intelligence collectively. We are absorbing more and more content. We download podcasts, scan social newsfeeds, search the internet and read online publications. These activities are typically bite-sized and done while multi-tasking. The trouble is that we are neglecting deep processing, which is more often associated with reading long-form books. Deep processing is the brain's ability to focus, remember and build meaning through previous knowledge.

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Try a brain test such as [Cambridge Brain Sciences](#) to gauge your short-term memory, reasoning and verbal ability. You can establish a baseline in order to better assess if you're trending downward.

With the leaders of Facebook, Google and other influential technology companies investing incredible sums in artificial intelligence, you might argue basic skills are becoming obsolete in the digital age. Maybe we can offload several forms of intelligence. However, the benefits are likely to have other setbacks. Case in point: It would be a shame if the advancement in driverless cars renders current or future generations unable to drive on their own should the need arise.