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Brain Rot and Other Internet Slang

After 'brain rot' was named Oxford's Word of the Year for 2024, there was a s[illegible] in Internet searches for 'brain rot meaning'. Typically used in a humorous, **s**[illegible]**g** way, the term describes being completely **f**[illegible]**d on** a t[illegible] piece of media, such as memes, videos or TikToks. The expression 'This is giving me brain rot,' playfully acknowledges the dopamine trap of e[illegible] scrolling.

Such terms demonstrate the Internet's growing role as a **b**[illegible] for new slang that represents not only how we communicate, but also how we think, see ourselves and interact with others. Some of the latest additions to our dictionaries reflect the need for new terms to express emerging social trends.

Spoiler Alert – Brain Rot Is Older than TikTok!

Although it may sound like a slang word invented by Gen Z, brain rot is not a new term. In fact, it was used by Henry David Thoreau in 'Walden', written over 150 years ago, to criticise society's preference for s[illegible] thinking over deep reflection. In our age of viral content, meme culture and d[illegible] attention spans, Thoreau's concerns now feel **u**[illegible] relevant.

The fact is that brain rot refers not only to the flood of low-quality, overstimulating online content, but also to the negative impact that excessive exposure to such content can have on users' behaviour and, ultimately, their mental health. It's not just a meme-culture term – mainstream media is increasingly treating brain rot as a reference to a deeper problem.

FYP: Friend or **Frenemy**?

The FYP (For You Page) feature is designed to keep users engaged with the platform for as long as possible and is a major contributor to the brain rot phenomenon. The more you interact with a certain type of content, even out of casual interest, the more similar material the algorithm will show you. What starts as harmless curiosity can quickly turn into hours of m[illegible]s d[illegible]lling, especially if the content is fast-paced, emotional – or simply bizarre.

Many users are unaware that their FYP does not actually reflect their values or personality, but rather what the algorithm thinks will hold their attention. The result is often a chaotic, overstimulating feed that leaves users feeling drained and unfocused, **c**[illegible] the next dopamine hit.

Goblin Mode and NPC Energy

Unsurprisingly, Internet slang evolved to reflect this reality. 'Goblin mode' was chosen by the public as the 2022 Oxford word of the year. It refers to the state of intentionally wi[illegible]ing from society and behaving in a lazy or **s**[illegible]**y** way, without any concern for appearances. While this may be harmless when used as an occasional **c**[illegible]**g mechanism** or a need for **d**[illegible]**e**, when it becomes the norm, it may indicate a deeper disconnection from reality.

Then there's NPC energy or 'Non-Player Character' behaviour – a term borrowed from the gaming world to refer to a character that is not directly controlled by the player but instead is controlled by the game's artificial intelligence. Online, it's used to describe people who seem to merely repeat trends or scripted opinions, lacking independent thought. It's a **t**[illegible]**-in-ch**[illegible] way of recognising how easily digital culture can turn people into passive consumers rather than active participants.

From Entertainment to Exhaustion

The real risk of adopting these habits lies in the gradual erosion of focus, creativity and emotional resilience. G[illegible]g c[illegible]up in endless loops of trivial c[illegible] can lead to problems with concentration, **c**[illegible]**e fatigue** and **s**[illegible]**relationships**.

When your mind is constantly occupied with fleeting trends and viral clips, it may become more difficult to maintain genuine in-real-life connections with the people around you. Taken to an extreme, this condition is described as being 'chronically online', where you are so absorbed in digital life that offline conversations and daily realities start to feel foreign.

Time to Touch Grass?

Needless to say, it was only a matter of time before a term was c[illegible] to refer to the antidote to these syndromes. And so the phrase 'touch grass' was born and has become popular advice for those who suffer from Internet addiction disorders. Originally used in a literal and humorous sense, it is now a serious reminder to disconnect from screens and go outside to reconnect with reality. Research consistently shows that spending time outdoors and IRL social interactions can improve mood, focus and emotional well-being.

Real Talk – It Goes Deeper Than Just Memes

At first glance, 'brain rot', 'goblin mode', 'NPC energy' and 'chronically online' may appear to be nothing more than the latest additions to the **jargon** of the younger generations. However, they reveal something more significant: a culture that is struggling with overstimulation, distraction and emotional f[illegible]e. Beyond the humour, these terms reflect growing social concern about digital life and mental health. While the Internet is undoubtedly a powerful tool, it's also evident that constant exposure to rapid-fire content is reshaping our thought processes, and not necessarily for the better.

But going online doesn't have to mean being chronically online. It's not a matter of c[illegible]ing the Internet as the **b**[illegible] of society. Whether we like it or not, it's clearly here to stay. The real challenge lies in knowing how to take advantage of this powerful tool without letting it control us or dictate our preferences. Sometimes the smartest move is to log off, step outside and literally t[illegible] g[illegible]

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