Cover Letter:

The goal for this first draft of my TED talk presentation script was to incorporate the information that I had researched and taken notes on into a presentable format. I was able to explain many of the concepts with more detail. One thing I would like to improve is making the presentation more approachable. I’d like to do this by providing more examples of the ideas that are relatable to the audience.

Introduction:

I feel like we often overlook how much our technology has changed over a relatively short period of time. The first iPhone was released in 2007, just thirteen years ago. Not only did this have a profound impact on our society and culture, but it completely changed the way that people had interacted with each other throughout history. This dramatic shift in our methods of communication has changed the way we think. It has quite subtly changed our behavior. Allow me to explain.

Part 1:

First, let’s address how our communication has changed. When people communicate by text or email, they obviously can't see each other, and you can’t hear each other’s voices. This means that giving and receiving (and then interpreting) nonverbal social cues is completely out of the equation. Yes, you can decipher intangible cues from a text or email, but this doesn’t require anything close to the same amount of skill needed to gauge someone’s emotions in person.

Additionally, when talking in person or over the phone, we don’t have time to consider what would be the best thing to say- it requires us to go with the flow of the conversation. This is the opposite of texting and emailing, where we can take as much time as we need first to react to what has been said, and then to piece together the ideal response. We don’t have to “think on our feet.”

Part 2:

How have these changes affected us? There are definitely some positive impacts of technology. The first relates to the idea that how we take in information affects how we think. For example, Reading books trains people to be more focused and increases attention span. It trains our brain to work in specific ways, and a similar phenomenon occurs with technology. When we use the internet frequently and become skilled with seeking out specific information with google searches, it trains and develops our ability to scan a large amount of information for
specific details. Another example of this is video games. They train our reaction times and our coordination and the efficiency of visual-spatial abilities. However, while technology can train us to do certain things well, some of its negative ramifications can be detrimental, particularly for younger people.

Part 3:

When technology becomes a significant part of our lives, we become dependent on being constantly connected. Very rarely are we truly free from the influence of technology. Never before have we had so little time to be truly alone. This means that we have much less time to reflect upon ourselves and our own thoughts and ideas, and our overall self-awareness is dramatically lowered.

Technology can also make us more impulsive. We have the ability to access vast amounts of information in a matter of seconds. However, we sometimes have to remind ourselves that this is a relatively new development.

With face-to-face conversation becoming increasingly uncommon, our social skills are impaired. Young people in particular can become more detached and less empathetic in in-person situations because of the effects of technology. This process has, of course, been accelerated by the recent transition to distance learning, which leads to even less face-to-face interaction.

Technology can also decrease motivation and affect our in-person decision making. It provides us with total control, and when people grow used to this, they become disconnected when trying to solve problems in the real world where we don't have the same certainty when making decisions. When traveling to a new place, we can get directions on our phones. When looking for somewhere to eat, we can read reviews and look at menus online. When invited to social functions we can even look through the online guest list to see who else will be attending. We can do all of this without talking to a single person. Never before have we had this much control over so many small uncertainties, but there is a problem with having this level of control. We have less experience dealing with uncertainties, and for many of us, this comes at a time when large-scale life choices like colleges and careers are becoming increasingly uncertain.

Part 4:

Social media can have a profound impact on our mental well-being. When social status is measured in the form of likes and comments, people are, often quite subtly, faced with pressure. They are incentivised to post things online which may not align with who they are authentically. When people become used to this, it may cause them to fall out of touch with who they really are. Most likely, social media will feel reliving at first because we can control how other people see us. However this can ultimately lead to anxiety and “social crisis” when the gap between someone’s appearance and who they really are becomes too large. This is made worse by the fact
that most of the people who are affected by this are at a stage in their life when they are already attempting to discover who they are. When observing other people’s social media, even when we are aware that it is different from real life, we will inherently compare ourselves to other people, another cause of anxiety.