SCI-TECH

"I have been younger in October than in all the months of spring."
W.S. MERWIN AMERICAN POET

Yalie launches new productivity app for 'mental renaissance'

BY ANYA GEIST
STAFF REPORTER

Yale student Collin Junus '27 last month launched a new productivity app called Monk, named after a general category of productivity apps dubbed "monk mode" apps.

Monk helps users set goals and restricts access to other, distracting apps, such as social media. Junus said he aims to help users "fight back against brainrot." Junus launched Monk with a small team of designers and editors and hosted a launch event on campus in September.

"Attention collapse is probably one of the biggest problems of our generation, and I felt it myself, right?" Junus said. "Honestly, I built Monk for myself first."

However, Junus hopes that Monk will become a status symbol.

"If you just want to drive a car, you can drive a Toyota Prius. But then why do people buy Ferraris? Right?" Junus said. "I don't want people to use Monk just because they need it, but I want them to use it because it makes them feel hotter, richer and more elite, right?"

Junus — whose website calls him a "Worldbuilder," "Polymath," "Genius" and "Asian Batman" — also has a YouTube channel under the name "Collin The Chad." Some of his videos include "how to glow up in 2025" and "how to be confident AF as a guy."

Just as he aims to influence social consciousness through his online presence, Junus hopes that Monk will launch a "cultural movement." He sees Monk as more than just a utility app but a "ritual" that users will come to rely on and connect with.

"I call it the mental renaissance, and that's the cultural aspect of it, right?" Junus said. "And what is the mental renaissance? It's the idea that stillness is rebellion."

Like other productivity apps, Monk uses time restrictions to limit usage of distractions such as Instagram or Youtube, in theory allowing users to have more productive time.

Josh Chen '27, a friend of Junus' who has used Monk, said that because users pay for it, the app is more likely to impact their behavior.

"That investment into yourself and your own behavior makes you more likely to stick to it," Chen said.

Junus frames Monk as a cultural ritual. Chen explained where he believed Junus came up with that marketing approach.

"I think framing Monk as a sort of revolution fits into the general trend of combatting screen addiction," Chen said. "Collin likes to say that brain rot was kind of fathered by Facebook and it rabbit-holed into social media in the early 2000s and 2010s. And in the past few years, you've seen many people in Gen-Z seeing and experiencing for themselves the detrimental effects of screen addiction."

Another user, Proud Ua-arak '27, also spoke about the screen addiction she deals with. When using other productivity apps, she said, she was likely to just bypass the time restriction set on her phone. However, she found Monk more effective at encouraging her to be more productive.



COURTESY OF COLLIN JUNUS

Monk, founded by Collin Junus '27, is meant to help students reduce distractions while studying or achieving other goals.

Ua-arak added that though she has few issues with the functionality of Monk, she might enjoy some added elements to the app.

"I'm someone who's a sucker for inspirational quotes or, you know, morning affirmations," Ua-arak said. Maybe, she added, the app could "notify me every morning to like, log in, or something like that."

Ua-arak finds Junus' approach to marketing his app — the cultural movement technique — interesting.

"Obviously, you know, when you sell a product, you don't just sell the product for itself," she said. "You sell it for the emotions and everything involved in it."

Ua-arak said this framing likely would not impact her use of the app in any way.

That being said, Ua-arak emphasized the value she has found in using a productivity app like Monk.

"Just reclaiming that time in the mornings and nights where I can't be doing something else," Ua-arak said, "I can wake up with a refreshed brain, or go to sleep without these distractions."

Junus' YouTube channel has 711,000 subscribers.

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What do Yale students and dermatologists say about skincare?

BY LEONARDO CHUNG
CONRIBUTING REPORTER

For many students at Yale, skincare is no longer just soap, lotion and sunscreen. Simple cleansers have given way to lengthy regimens of serums, moisturizers and acids as social media popularizes routines that promise glow and confidence.

Across the United States, dermatologists say that young people are adopting increasingly layered skincare routines, incorporating products like retinol, exfoliating acids and natural alternatives such as beef tallow. While some say that the routine craze can be helpful when it builds good habits, it can be risky when students stack too many products or chase trends without medical guidance.

Dermatologists at Yale agree to a baseline: keep it simple, stay consistent — and most importantly — wear sunscreen.

"It's great that people care about skin, but everyone online seems to be an expert," said Sara Perkins, a dermatologist at Yale Medicine. "As dermatologists, our role is to help people understand what has evidence and what does not, and overall help navigate the over-the-counter skincare space."

Perkins notes that the two common issues in her clinic are confusion and overuse. Students with large collections of skincare products are often unsure which ones do anything at all.

"Consistency is key," she said. "You must give a regimen four to six weeks before judging it."

She recommends a gentle cleanser twice a day, moisturizer and daily sunscreen. Retinoids and acne washes can help, but only when there is a clear need.

Mary Laird, another dermatologist at Yale Medicine, agreed that complicated routines are not always necessary.

"If a regimen like this is working for someone, then great!" she wrote to the News. "But they are typically unnecessary, can be expensive and can cause irritation, so a simpler routine often works just as well."

Perkins also said that the products themselves are oftentimes not the trouble — but rather how people combine them without knowing how they work can cause problems. "Skin is delicate. More is not always better," she emphasized.

Sa Rang Kim MED '19, a dermatologist at Yale Medicine specializing in skin-cancer prevention, noted she has seen trends appear in her clinic as well.

"It's nice that social media has made skincare part of daily conversation, but misinformation can be harmful," she said. Kim mentioned that she has seen many students use unnecessary 10- to 12-step routines.

Students' habits vary. Some keep it minimal.

"I just wash my face daily," Elena Miinea '29 said. After an adverse allergic reaction to benzoyl peroxide, she avoided new products and continues to be wary of influencer promotions. "Some influencers might be getting real results, but others might be getting paid to provide certain opinions, so it's not the most transparent process."

Mridula Bharathi '29 uses face wash, an exfoliating toner, Vaseline and a gel moisturizer at night. "I consider my skincare a source of happiness for me. My routine can take as long as I want, so I do it every night," she told the News.

She also said that she was able to find the products that were most suitable with her skin through trial and error, and that her routine is always subject to improvement if she finds better products.

Bharathi believes that many children are influenced by social media influencers to buy skin products, such as anti-aging serum, that they do not really need.

Perkins and Laird, mentioned two red flags to watch out for: pain or persistent redness.

"Your routine should never cause pain, redness, irritation, itch or rash," Laird wrote. "If any regimen is not working for you after a couple of months, it might be time to see a dermatologist."

Kim emphasized a similar caution against homemade remedies. She said that ingredients such as baking soda and lemon juice are commonly used in DIY face masks, which can cause skin irritation. Instead, using products that list their active ingredients is safest and most effective.

Sunscreen was the largest gap between dermatologist advice and student behavior. Perkins called daily sunscreen the most important habit.

Perkins urged students to make sunscreen use automatic, because small exposures such as the sun coming through the windows and short walks can add up.

"Sunscreen is the least flashy but most important step," said Perkins. "Apply sunscreen every day, all year. Build the habit so you don't forget."

Campus and seasonal factors can also play a role in skincare. Perkins pointed to wind, cold weather and snow glare as sneaky sources of damage, while Laird said winter dryness can worsen eczema and may require thicker moisturizers.

Kim added that New England weather extremes make skincare unpredictable: dorm heaters in the winter can cause skin dryness, while summer sweat can also lead to irritation.

According to Fortune Business Insights, the skincare industry is projected to reach a value of $30.42 billion by 2032.

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Experts at Yale Medicine say that evidence-based habits — cleansing, moisturizing and sun protection — matter more than following viral trends.

