



## HOPE Newsletter - Issue 81

### [Are You Addicted To Your Cell Phone Quiz?](#)

#### **Smartphone Addiction**

Smartphones are amazing.  
Smartphones can be addicting.  
How to take control.

by ANDREA DOWNING PECK

Today, an estimated 90 percent of teens own a smartphone. While smartphones provide students

with a level of personal security and can be a helpful academic tool, phones can be distractions in the classroom and when students are doing homework or preparing to sleep. Making matters worse, studies show the mere presence of a cellphone can be distracting.

Smartphones entice us using push notifications, bright colors, bells, swoosh sounds, refresh and infinite scrolling. They are designed to be addicting, says Costco member Catherine Price, author of *How to Break Up with Your Phone* (Ten Speed Press, 2018). "Nothing is by chance," she says, noting the smartphone's resemblance to a slot machine. "That is crucial for people to realize."

Forty-seven percent of parents fear their children have an unhealthy relationship with their mobile devices, a 2018 Common Sense Media survey reports.

"If a child is on their phone a lot, they're going to be drawn to being on their phone a lot," says Costco member Cosette Rae, CEO and founding member of reSTART, a Seattle-area internet addiction center (see "Tech treatment" sidebar). "It's a very

addictive medium. They're not going to have the ability that an adult might to control their use. You have to be a courageous parent to set healthy boundaries for your child."

## **Changes in behavior**

"Normal" smartphone use becomes problematic use when a child begins withdrawing from family or outside activities, isn't sleeping, fails to complete schoolwork or prefers spending time on their phone to socializing. Becoming angry or inconsolable when separated from their phone is another signal a child may be hooked on the device.

"Is the child able to modify their behavior quickly, or does the behavior only modify when the phone or device is back in their hand?" asks school consultant Ana Homayoun, author of *Social*

*Media Wellness* (Corwin, 2017; not available at Costco). The Costco member notes that digital overuse can prevent children from developing critical social and emotional skills because they spend too much time communicating through a screen.

## **Responsible and moderate use**

Katie Davis believes teens must be taught to use their phones "responsibly and in moderation." An assistant professor at the University of Washington

Information School, she provides a few tips for taming a smartphone habit:

- Limit push notifications, switch the screen to grayscale and remove social media apps from the home screen.
- Establish household etiquette around cellphone use, including smartphone-free zones (bedrooms) and times (meals, restaurants, family gatherings).
- Download and set up a screen-time tracking app.
- Create family rewards for putting your phone "to bed" nightly or reducing screen time.
- Enable "Do Not Disturb While Driving" features or use apps that discourage distracted driving.
- Identify new activities for spending time away from your phone.

"Problematic use is when the internet gets in the way of your other activities and starts to negatively impact your life," Davis, a Costco member, points out. While parents often cast a critical eye at their children's phone use, they should examine the example they are setting.

"Most adults are spending hours a day on their phones," says Price. "The first thing to do is to look in the mirror."

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