

# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Smartphone Addiction

By Natalie J. Dahl, MS, CCC-SLP

Smartphones are everywhere you look; they are used by adults, teens, and even young children to text, call, search the internet, play games, and watch videos. They are amazing technology that can help people access the world around them, but they can also be a source of bad habits and behaviors leading to addiction. The popularity and availability of smartphones have increased in recent years; on average, smartphone use by adults is 5.4 hours a day, while use by teens and kids is 5.7 hours a day. With so many hours of each day being taken up by smartphone use, questions about addiction and adverse effects arise.

In the first study of its kind, scientists recently used magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to observe the adverse health effects for those that use smartphones excessively. Results showed that those who displayed addictive tendencies toward their smartphones had less gray matter in their brains. This means there was less activity in the parts of their brains involved in muscle control, perception of senses like seeing and hearing, memory, emotions, speech, decision making, and self-control. This study was the first to question “the harmlessness of smartphones” and to show concrete evidence that there can be negative effects for those who meet the criteria for having a smartphone addiction.



If you're not sure if you are addicted to your smartphone, ask yourself the following questions to gauge the time spent on your phone and your relationship with it:

- Do you have your smartphone in your hand most of the day?
- Do you get anxious when you're away from your smartphone?
- Do you lose time while on your smartphone without realizing it?
- Does your battery run out before the end of the day?
- Are you on your smartphone in social situations?



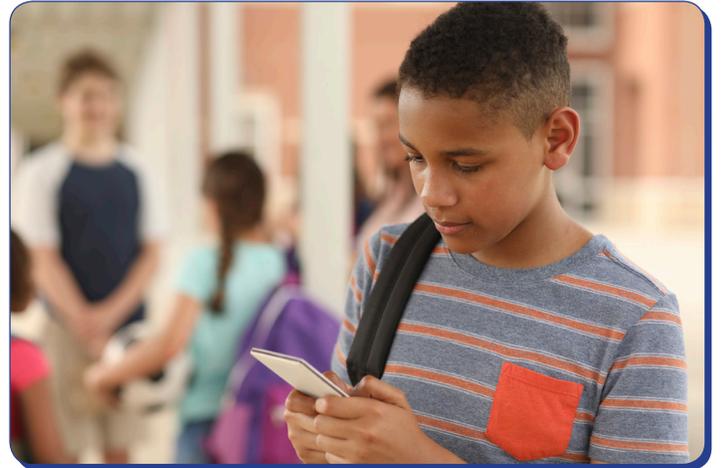
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- Do you check your smartphone as soon as you wake up?
- Are you using your smartphone even while eating or watching TV?

If you answered “yes” to some or all of those questions, here are some ideas to curb your addictive behaviors toward your smartphone:

- If you use your smartphone as a morning alarm, move it to the other side of the room.
- Make a to-do list for the day to help manage your time.
- Turn notifications off.
- Set aside a fixed time of the day to look at your smartphone.
- Delete apps that take up too much of your time.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Use apps to monitor your usage.
- Use a real watch instead of a smartwatch.



Both adults and children can experience addictive tendencies toward smartphones. However, adults must be a good example to teens and children for establishing healthy habits and reasonable phone usage. Teens and children need to decrease the average time spent on smartphones to not experience the negative health effects that may cause long-term damage.

Resources:

“6 Habits That Work To Stop Morning Smartphone Addiction,” Thrive Global, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/6-habits-that-work-to-stop-morning-smartphone-addiction/>

“15 Ways to Overcome Smartphone Addiction,” Easy Ways To Do Everything, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.easyways.net/15-easy-ways-overcome-smartphone-addiction/>

“How You Can Tell If You’re Addicted To Your Smartphone,” TechGuide, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.techguide.com.au/news/mobiles-news/can-tell-youre-addicted-smartphone/>

“Structural and functional correlates of smartphone addiction,” ScienceDirect, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460319313802?via%3Dihub>

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