



**Middle School Parent  
Cell Phone and Electronics Information Night  
September 6, 2018**

**Introduction**

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Principal**

**Fostering a Healthy Social, Emotional and  
Academic Environment**

**Kelly Hawking  
Guidance Counselor**

**Parent Internet Safety**


**Dep. Chris Hudson**

**Closing**

**Ms. Sue Fair  
Middle School Assistant Principal**



# Parent Resources



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- ▶ American School Counselor Association
- ▶ National Education Association
- ▶ PEW Research Center

COMMENTARY

# The Student Cellphone Addiction Is No Joke

By Steve Gardiner

April 26, 2016

Addiction is a strong word, but it accurately describes the dysfunctional behavior exhibited by teenagers in my high school English classroom when I ask them to put away their cellphones.

In a career that spans 38 years, I have not seen any single diversion that so distracts students from reading, writing, thinking, and working. When the cellphone is in front of them, they are completely focused on it. When the cellphone is in the backpack, they are worried because they can't see it.

On the first day of class, I tell them that if they can't go 57 minutes without checking their cellphones, they have a problem and need to seek professional help. They laugh. I laugh, but I know how true that is. Only when I tell them to take their cellphones and put them inside their backpacks do they start to understand how accurate my diagnosis is.

In much the same way a chemical dependency controls an addict's life, my students' cellphones control their lives. Students claim they can read and listen to music at the same time. They claim they can do math and text simultaneously. Numerous research studies state otherwise. The ability to multitask with a cellphone is an illusion. With a phone in front of them, students' thinking is fragmented, as is all their work.

We provide help to people who can't control their behavior related to gambling, sex, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. We have no programs to help teenagers who can't live two minutes without seeing their phones.

Yes, they have their excuses.

"I am expecting a text from my mom."

"My grandma is in the hospital."

"My boss is going to tell me what time I have to work this afternoon."

"I need to know where my friends are going to eat lunch."

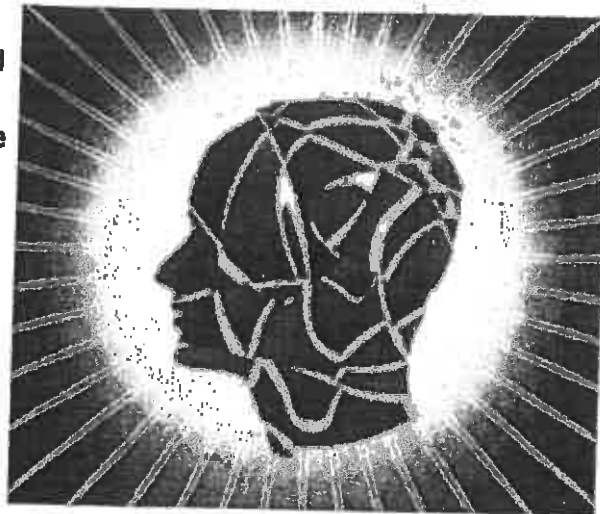
All of those reasons may involve important information. Some of them may actually be true. We have eight minutes between classes. We have 43 minutes at lunch. School rules allow students to use their phones during those times, but not during class. That means nothing to them.

They get creative. They text in their laps. They text in their notebooks. They text inside their pockets.

Back to Story



They tell me how important it is to respond to their friends, but the irony is that in paying so much attention to the friend on the other end of the cell connection, they blatantly ignore the friends sitting in the room with them. They walk down the hallways, oblivious to the hundreds of other students walking past them, in order to text a student on the other side of the building.



—Getty

Needing a phone in hand or sitting on the desk in front of them reminds me of Linus from the Peanuts comics, who carries a security blanket. Cellphones have become the modern security blanket. It is not just during school, at lunch, or after school. Students are using their cellphones 24/7. They sleep with them by their beds and text each other throughout the night.

I don't want to be a part of the cellphone police. It is a losing battle. This addiction is so strong that it is not going to change one bit because I ask them to put away their phones and discuss a short story with the class. It is not going to change because I confiscate a phone and take it to the office. In fact, in the latter case, the students report to the office shaking, the administrators tell me, in a state of panic about how to get their phones back.

**"The ability to multitask with a cellphone is an illusion. With a phone in front of them, students' thinking is fragmented, as is all their work."**

There are legitimate reasons to have cellphones out in class. There are applications that work exceptionally well in most subject areas and make the cellphone a good learning tool. Even during those situations, however, a majority of students will be off task and doing something besides the assignment. They cannot control good use of the device. It controls them.

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What will they do when they are out of school and in the workplace? Many of them will lose jobs based on their obsessive and dependent behavior.

Yes, addiction is a strong word, but physically, mentally, and emotionally, a high percentage of teenagers are addicted to their cellphones. We have incentives to promote attendance and graduation, but many teenagers need help, because their bodies are in the classroom, but their minds are inside their cellphones.

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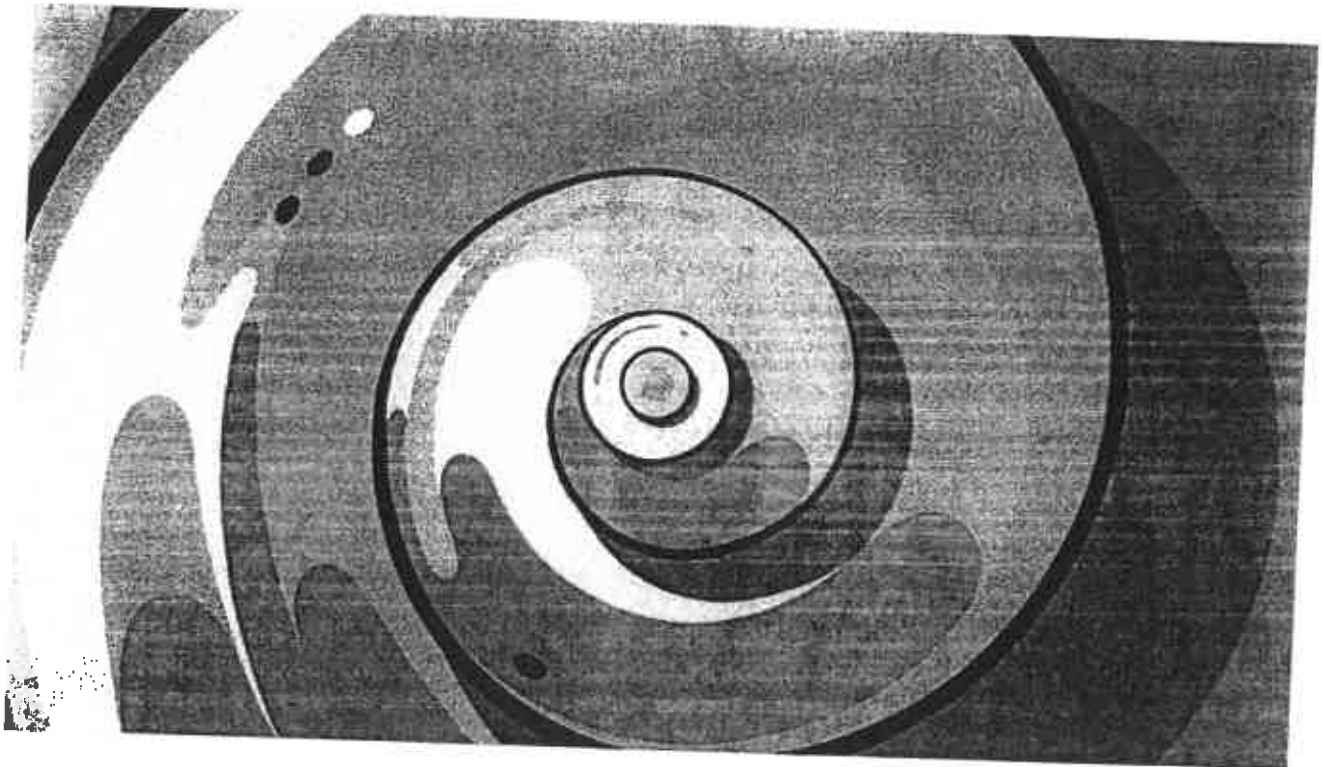
**Harvard  
Business  
Review**

**PSYCHOLOGY**

# Having Your Smartphone Nearby Takes a Toll on Your Thinking

by Kristen Duke, Adrian Ward, Ayelet Gneezy, and Maarten Bos

MARCH 20, 2018



OLIVER HIBERT/GETTY IMAGES

“Put your phone away” has become a commonplace phrase that is just as often dismissed. Despite wanting to be in the moment, we often do everything within our power to the contrary. We take out our phones to take pictures in the middle of festive family meals, and send text messages or update our social media profiles in the middle of a date or while watching a movie. At the same time, we are often interrupted passively by notifications of emails or phone calls. Clearly, interacting with our smartphones affects our experiences. But can our smartphones affect us even when we aren't interacting with them—when they are simply nearby?

In recent research, we investigated whether merely having one's own smartphone nearby could influence cognitive abilities. In two lab experiments, nearly 800 people completed tasks designed to measure their cognitive capacity. In one task, participants simultaneously completed math problems and memorized random letters. This tests how well they can keep track of task-relevant information while engaging in a complex cognitive task. In the second task, participants saw a set of images that formed an incomplete pattern, and chose the image that best completed the pattern. This task measures “fluid intelligence,” or people's ability to reason and solve novel problems. Performance on both of these tasks is affected by individuals' available mental resources.

Our intervention was simple: before completing these tasks, we asked participants to either place their phones in front of them (face-down on their desks), keep them in their pockets or bags, or leave them in another room. Importantly, all phones had sound alerts and vibration turned off, so the participants couldn't be interrupted by notifications.

The results were striking: individuals who completed these tasks while their phones were in another room performed the best, followed by those who left their phones in their pockets. In last place were those whose phones were on their desks. We saw

similar results when participants' phones were turned off: people performed worst when their phones were nearby, and best when they were away in a separate room. Thus, merely having their smartphones out on the desk led to a small but statistically significant impairment of individuals' cognitive capacity—on par with effects of lacking sleep.

This cognitive capacity is critical for helping us learn, reason, and develop creative ideas. In this way, even a small effect on cognitive capacity can have a big impact, considering the billions of smartphone owners who have their devices present at countless moments of their lives. This means that in these moments, the mere presence of our smartphones can adversely affect our ability to think and problem-solve – even when we aren't using them. Even when we aren't looking at them. Even when they are face-down. And even when they are powered off altogether.

Why are smart phones so distracting, even when they're not buzzing or chirping at us? The costs of smartphones are inextricably linked to their benefits. The immense value smartphones provide, as personal hubs connecting us to each other and to virtually all of the world's collective knowledge, necessarily positions them as important and relevant to myriad aspects of our everyday lives. Research in cognitive psychology shows that humans learn to automatically pay attention to things that are habitually relevant to them, even when they are focused on a different task. For example, even if we are actively engaged in a conversation, we will turn our heads when someone says our name across the room. Similarly, parents automatically attend to the sight or sound of a baby's cry.

Our research suggests that, in a way, the mere presence of our smartphones is like the sound of our names - they are constantly calling to us, exerting a gravitational pull on our attention. If you have ever felt a "phantom buzz" you inherently know this. Attempts to block or resist this pull takes a toll by impairing our cognitive abilities. In

a poignant twist, then, this means that when we are *successful* at resisting the urge to attend to our smartphones, we may actually be undermining our own cognitive performance.

Are you affected? Most likely. Consider the most recent meeting or lecture you attended: did anyone have their smartphone out on the table? Think about the last time you went to the movies, or went out with friends, read a book, or played a game: was your smartphone close by? In all of these cases, merely having your smartphone present may have impaired your cognitive functioning.

Our data also show that the negative impact of smartphone presence is most pronounced for individuals who rank high on a measure capturing the strength of their connection to their phones—that is, those who strongly agree with statements such as “I would have trouble getting through a normal day without my cell phone” and “It would be painful for me to give up my cell phone for a day.” In a world where people continue to increasingly rely on their phones, it is only logical to expect this effect to become stronger and more universal.

We are clearly not the first to take note of the potential costs of smartphones. Think about the number of fatalities associated with driving while talking on the phone or texting, or of texting while walking. Even hearing your phone ring while you're busy doing something else can boost your anxiety. Knowing we have missed a text message or call leads our minds to wander, which can impair performance on tasks that require sustained attention and undermine our enjoyment. Beyond these cognitive and health-related consequences, smartphones may impair our social functioning: having your smartphone out can distract you during social experiences and make them less enjoyable.



With all these costs in mind, however, we must consider the immense value that smartphones provide. In the course of a day, you may use your smartphone to get in touch with friends, family, and coworkers; order products online; check the weather; trade stocks; read HBR; navigate your way to a new address, and more. Evidently, smartphones increase our efficiency, allowing us to save time and money, connect with others, become more productive, and remain entertained.

So how do we resolve this tension between the costs and benefits of our smartphones?

Smartphones have distinct uses. There are situations in which our smartphones provide a key value, such as when they help us get in touch with someone we're trying to meet, or when we use them to search for information that can help us make better decisions. Those are great moments to have our phones nearby. But, rather than smartphones taking over our lives, we should take back the reigns: when our smartphones aren't directly necessary, and when being fully cognitively available is important, setting aside a period of time to put them away—in another room—can be quite valuable.

With these findings in mind, students, employees, and CEOs alike may wish to maximize their productivity by defining windows of time during which they plan to be separated from their phones, allowing them to accomplish tasks requiring deeper thought. Moreover, asking employees not to use their phones during meetings may not be enough. Our work suggests that having meetings without phones present can be more effective, boosting focus, function, and the ability to come up with creative solutions. More broadly, we can all become more engaged and cognitively adept in our everyday lives simply by putting our smartphones (far) away.

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**This article is about PSYCHOLOGY**

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# NINTE APPS

## PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Courtesy of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office



**BUMBLE**

BUMBLE is similar to the popular dating app "Tinder" however, it requires women to make the first contact. Kids have been known to use BUMBLE to create fake accounts and falsify their age.



**SNAPCHAT**

SNAPCHAT is one of the most popular apps of 2014. While the app promises users can take a photo/video and it will disappear, recent features including "stories" allows users to view content for up to 24 hours. Snapchat also allows users to see your location.



**KIK**

KIK allows anyone to contact and direct message your child. Kids can bypass traditional text messaging features. Kik gives users unlimited access to anyone, anywhere, anytime.



**LIVE ME**

LIVE ME is a live-streaming video app that uses geolocation to share videos so users can find out a broadcaster's exact location. Users can earn "coins" as a way to "pay" minors for photos.



**HOLLA**

HOLLA is a self-proclaimed "addicting" video chat app that allows users to meet people all over the world in just seconds. Reviewers say they have been confronted with racial slurs, explicit content, and more.



**WHISPER**

WHISPER is an anonymous social network that promotes sharing secrets with strangers. It also reveals a user's location so people can meet up.



**ASK.FM**

ASK.FM is known for cyber bullying. The app encourages users to allow anonymous people to ask them questions.



**CALCULATOR%**

CALCULATOR% is only one of SEVERAL secret apps used to hide photos, videos, files, and browser history.



**HOT OR NOT**

HOT OR NOT encourages users to rate your profile, check out people in their area, and chat with strangers. The goal of this app is to hook up.

### WhatsApp



WhatsApp is a  
Texting app that  
Usually goes  
Unchecked by parents

### TikTok/Musically



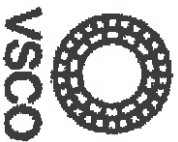
TikTok/Musically  
is an app to record  
Yourself lip-sinking  
To a variety of music  
And share with friends.

### AfterSchool



AfterSchool is an  
Anonymous social  
Networking app that  
allows  
The kids to communicate  
With other kids at school  
Anonymously cyber  
bullying  
Goes unchecked

### VSCO



VSCO is a lot like  
Instagram and  
SnapChat

