

- 1. Mark your confusion.**
- 2. Show evidence of a close reading.**
- 3. Write a 1+ page reflection.**

You Might Just Be Addicted: Smartphone Use Physically Affects Your Brain, Study Says

Source: Coral Murphy, *USA Today*, February 19, 2020

The average American spends around four hours a day on their smartphone, according to the latest string of surveys. That's more than a month and a half of time each year – swiping, scrolling, and staring at our handheld screens. Think that sounds extreme? Check it on your own phone right now. Go ahead, I'll wait.

For iPhones:

Open up the Settings app. Scroll down to the "Screen Time" section that's grouped with Notifications, Sounds, and Do Not Disturb. Tap on "Screen Time" to see your usage statistics. You'll see a "Daily Average." Just below that, click "See All Activity" to get your weekly stats. You can compare your weekly stats with past weeks by scrolling up and using one of the arrows where it says "This Week."

For Android:

While this OS can vary by device maker, this is the most common way to find the info: Go to Settings > Battery. Tap the 3-dot menu, and go to Battery usage. Tap the 3 dot menu again, and choose Show full device usage. Both options let you see some degree of where you're spending most of your time on your phone, whether it's on social media, listening to music, podcasts or audiobooks, emailing, texting, online shopping, mobile gaming, etc.

You might have a problem if...

Even though smartphone addiction is not an officially recognized psychiatric disorder (yet), many mental health experts now treat it as one. Website PsychCentral suggests you might have a problem if you:

- Feel extremely anxious if your phone battery dies or if you lose service
- Use your phone up until the minute you go to bed and checking it the minute you wake up
- Sleep with your phone on your bed
- Reach for your phone in times of anxiety or depression
- Mindlessly pass time by looking at your phone

It's not you, it's your phone

Our brains are wired to get little "happy hits" of dopamine off of social media posts, online videos, mobile games, and more. Our smartphones are engineered to make us crave them. Tech companies actually hire psychologists, neuroscientists, and social science experts to help them hack the human brain and keep people coming back for more.

That's why a lot of us equate spending less time on our phones with giving up something we love. As "How to Break Up With Your Phone," author Catherine Price explains, we have to reframe the way we think of our phone time, "the time you spend on your phone is time you're not spending doing other pleasurable things," not the other way around. So instead of thinking of it as "spending less time on your phone," think of it as "spending more time on your life."

No time for...

OK, now imagine what you could do with just getting half of the time back that you now spend staring, swiping, and phubbing? Isn't it ironic that we're a nation of people who covet freedom, yet so easily and willingly give it up for our devices?

Take a moment right now and write down (with a pen and piece of paper) one thing you would love to do if you had more time. Sleep? Exercise? Learn a new language? Spend more quality time with

your spouse or kids? Write it down and put it in a place you'll see it every day, like your bathroom mirror or refrigerator. Use this written reminder to guide you toward your goal of less "empty" time on your phone and more "full" time on your life.

Outsmart your devices

You can use your screen time settings to put limits on specific apps or lock yourself out during specific times of the day. Trouble is, it's really easy to ignore your own rules, especially with the built-in workaround the phones give you to buy more time online.

Using tech to save you from too much tech can be a good way to go. Start by turning off app notifications, and all of those rings, dings, and annoying things that constantly demand your attention.

Time-tracking apps like Moment, Freedom and Flipd also block access to problematic apps and websites when you want to take a break Flipd even makes a game out of it and lets you create friendly challenges with other people to see who can spend the most time offline.

Google recently launched a few helpful apps for Android devices too including Activity Bubbles, which replaces your wallpaper with bubbles that grow and fill up to represent what you're doing on your phone. Similarly, Screen Stopwatch counts how much time you've spent on your phone each day and puts it front and center where it's difficult to ignore.

Another way to make our screens less appealing is to change settings to black and white. Try it. All of a sudden Instagram isn't so addicting. To turn your iPhone to black and white, go to the Settings app > General > Accessibility > Display Accommodations > Color Filters. Turn "Color Filters" on, and you'll see the option for Grayscale at the top.

Trial separation

Don't try to go totally cold turkey, but rather practice some trial separations first.

I've started leaving my iPhone behind on hikes or runs in the woods. Yes, it's scary to think my family might need me in that hour away from my phone, but it's also totally liberating. It finally gives me time to get back in touch with myself and my own thoughts.

Honestly, I've missed the quiet moments of clarity and creativity more than I've ever missed my phone.

Bethany Baker, executive director of A-GAP, a nonprofit aimed at helping people create healthier relationships with technology, also recommends building mini digital detox moments into your daily routine. "Make breakfast a phone-free time, or take 20 minutes in the afternoon where you purposely refrain from checking your social media," Baker says.

She also recommends practicing "digital minimalism" by refreshing people skills. "Make coffee dates to see friends, face to face to catch up. Avoid texting and facetimeing and make the interaction real."

What does a healthy relationship look like?

Another trick that's worked for me is thinking of my time spent with my iPhone in terms of a human relationship. According to the One Love Foundation, a nonprofit that teaches young people how to identify and avoid abuse, "a healthy relationship should feel easy and make you happy." On the flip side, an unhealthy relationship includes manipulation, possessiveness, isolation, and guilt. In other words, what many of us experience as part of FOMO and apps "trying to control your decisions, actions or emotions."

This is where it helps to "get existential about it," according to Price. She encourages people to think about their own mortality "How many people on their deathbeds do you think are going to say, "I wish I'd spent more time on Facebook"? Keep asking yourself the same question, again and again and again: This is your life. How much of it do you want to spend on your phone?"

Possible Response Questions:

- Are you concerned about cell phone addiction? Explain.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a "move" made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.