

2018 10.16 Health Matters Smartphone Addiction

Joseph

This is Health Matters, reporting on smartphone addiction.

Mike

Widespread addiction to smartphones has become a headliner health issue. Statistics tell the story. The average smartphone user checks his or her smartphone 150 times a day. And sends an average of 110 texts daily. Twenty six percent of today's car accidents are caused by people using mobil phone devices while driving. And there's been a ten-fold increase in accidents involving pedestrians on mobile devices.

Coty

Fifty percent of smartphone users feel uneasy if they leave it at home. There's even a psychological term for this: nomophobia (no-mo-FOE-beeah), short for "no-mobile-phone-phobia. In other words, fear of being without a mobile device. Nomophobia also refers to anxieties that stem from being beyond mobile phone contact.

The number of youth who text or tweet instead of actually talking to others is growing steadily. According to Psychology Today magazine, an increasing number of college students now shower with their smartphone.

Joe

About two in three people sleep with, or next to, their smartphone. This habit is even higher among college students. More than half

never switch them off. Thirty four percent of all users admit to answering their cell phone during intimacy.

The health ramifications of this include something called text neck – a cramping, stabbing pain caused by looking down at your phone too long. There’s also poor posture, which can affect your spine, your breathing and even your emotions.

Mike

Research has determined that the blue light emitted from cellular and other internet devices can disrupt our body’s melatonin production. Melatonin regulates sleep. Over time, this disruption causes sleep disorders.

At this point, few question the impact of these devices on brain function. People who are over-dependent on smartphones are basically damaging their ability to be attentive. And they have higher levels of depression and anxiety.

Coty

The long-term impact of this addiction on young people’s brains is a mounting concern. Scientists are recommending that children spend no more than two hours a day of recreational screen time.

The good news is that cognitive behavioral therapy with teens addicted to smartphones brought disturbed neurotransmitter levels back to normal function after nine weeks. Whether or not cognitive behavioral therapy can permanently heal smartphone addiction is a question that needs more research.

Joe

Last spring KIDE launched *Youth and Truth on Addiction*, a project to add youth voices to ongoing community discussion about our local addiction crisis. Volunteers from grades six through twelve participated. One of the questions we asked was: Are smart phones addicting?

Coty

The young people who participated in these discussions think smartphones are addicting. But not because they've read the news stories. They've come to this conclusion through their own experience. As one youth said, "Yeah, smartphones are addicting. My friends -- whenever I'm talking to them -- they'll just be on their phones. And even I act addicted sometimes. I was sent to the store but on the way got into texting and forget what I was supposed to be doing."

Another student said: "When you get "likes" on Instagram it makes you feel good about yourself. It's great if you get a lot of likes and people think you're pretty. But what if you don't?"

Mike

Our local youth are not only aware of the problem, they are sensitive to its complexities. One youth worries about parents controlling their time on electronics. Her concern is that some kids might get bullied by parents and want to commit suicide or hurt themselves in some way.

Joe

And that's not as strange as it may sound. According to a Common Sense Media poll, 50% of teens feel they have cell phone

addiction and 77 percent of parents and teens have argued about smartphone usage.

Coty

One Youth and Truth volunteer voiced another concern – that we need to pay more attention to the world now. Instead of being glued to screens all the time. As she put it, “We need to pay attention because this Earth is not going to last if we keep mistreating it. We need to take care of it.”

Mike

Perhaps its time to expand the discussion of addiction. We have an opioid and heroin epidemic. Are we confronting other addictions as well? Our youth have genuine concerns about how addiction impacts their lives and the environment we depend upon.

Joseph

Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community. Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA. Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco. Our readers were Coty Yarborough, Michael Heminger and Joseph Orozco. For this audio and more information, visit our download area at www.kidefm.org.

Sources and Links

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