

**April 2024 issue:**

- **Teen cell phone use and mental health**
- **Cell phone addiction - tips for parents**
- **Community resources and books**

A monthly newsletter for Berkeley Institute parents promoting Wellness & Mental Health

# Healthy Mind



## Adolescent Cell Phone Addiction -Tips for Parents

- Have an open conversation with your child on cell phone use and over-use.
- Establish boundaries at home about specific times when the phone should be put away, (e.g., at the kitchen table while eating, or while having face-to-face conversations).
- Turn off wi-fi at home from time to time or take the phone away when it becomes problematic.
- Encourage family time, when the entire family turns off the mobile phone for a few hours on the weekend and spends quality time together doing an outdoor activity.
- Check your child's text messages regularly on What's app, and on Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram pages to ensure that he / she is having appropriate conversations with peers and not engaging in conversations with strangers and internet predators.



## Adolescent Cell Phone Use and Mental Health

Since the advent of smart phones, which now enable us to text, call, e-mail, surf the Internet, transfer money, pay bills, and read websites, cell phone use has become an indispensable tool for communication, education, and social enjoyment. However, uncontrollable use of cell phones in adolescents can seriously interfere with school work, familial relationships and friendships, and day to day functioning (Help Guide, 2024). Teens in this day and age are spending increasingly excessive amounts of time repeatedly checking their phones, scrolling and posting on social media, texting friends, and using apps. This often continues into the early hours of the morning, thereby negatively affecting sleep and leaving them feeling exhausted and moody during the school day. A study reported in The Daily Mail newspaper in the U.K. revealed that 50% of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 receive an average of 237 notifications on their phone per day, mainly from the social media apps Snapchat and Instagram (The Daily Mail, 2023). Approximately a quarter of these alerts are sent to their cell phones during regular school hours, and an additional 5% pop up between midnight and 5 am on weeknights (The Daily Mail, 2023). This represents a huge distraction for adolescents, and may result in lack of preparedness for school, poor performance on assignments and tests, an inability to focus on daily responsibilities, and sleep disturbances, to name a few. As many as 40% of adolescents sleep less than 7 hours a night, according to a U.S. survey

(Abi-Joude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020). The overwhelming, fast-pace of a smart phone can negatively impact adolescents' mood, cognitive ability, memory, and attention span during a critical time in their lives when their brains are still developing (The Daily Mail, 2023). In addition, spending more than a few hours on one's phone per week is connected to a decrease in happiness, satisfaction, and self-esteem (Abi-Joude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020). Interestingly, a study of university students who reported spending more time on Facebook have reported that they felt envious of others who subjectively appeared to be "better off" than they were. Additionally, a rise in stress and "FOMO" (fear of missing out) was also noticed (Abi-Joude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020).

It would be very beneficial for parents to adopt strategies to limit excessive cell phone use – particularly social media - given that it tends to present issues when adolescents spend more than 2 hours surfing social media sites (Abi-Joude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020). Parents can also try to model healthy cell phone use when in front of their children, as heavy smartphone use in parents can result in a decrease in the quality of their relationship with their children (Abi-Joude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020).

## What resources can I use to help my child spend less time on his / her cell phone?

- ❖ **The Department of Child & Family Services – Counseling & Life Skills Services-** Provides counseling, education, and emotional support for young people and their families to cope with life challenges, relationships, and substance misuse / addiction in order to improve functioning. Call the 24-hour child hotline: 278-9111.

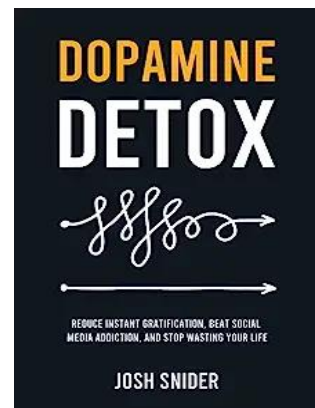
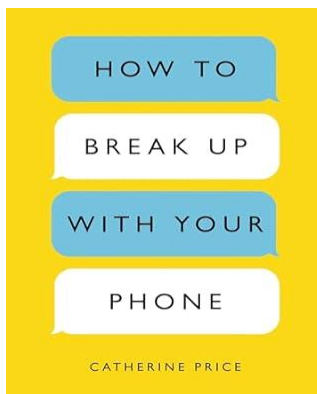
### References:

Abi-Jaoude, E., Naylor, K. T., & Pignatiello, A. (2020). Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health. *Cmaj*, 192(6), E136-E141.

Philan, M., (2023, April 18). *Average child is sent up to nearly 5,000 alerts on their cellphone every day.* Taken from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-12571849/Average-child-sent-nearly-5-000-alerts-cellphone-day.html>

Robinson. L. Smith, M. & Segal, J. (2024, April 18). *Smartphone and Internet Addiction.* Taken from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addiction/smartphone-addiction.htm>

The 3 books below are all available on Amazon. Take some time to peruse them.



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