

## Put Down the Freakin' Phone!



“Put down the phone!” It is the rally cry of parents everywhere, trying to get their children to put down their electronics and get engaged in the real world. However, studies are showing that ADULTS are actually more obsessed than their younger counterparts when it comes to living inside their portable electronic worlds.

### Why are we so obsessed?

What is it about those compact computer gadgets that enthrall us so much? The list could go on and on, but a few of the more common reasons include:

**Staying Connected to Work** – Having a phone immediately links us to our jobs no matter where we are, what time it is, and who we are with. We increasingly have come to believe that by staying continuously connected to work, we

ensure our relevance and significance in the workplace.

**Keeping Tabs on Family** – There is a level of comfort that comes with knowing we can immediately connect with kids or parents when we aren't together.

**Staying Informed** – We can find out local, national, and world events in seconds with a click of an app.

**Social Butterfly** – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat – the apps that link us to other people in cyberspace take the place of being somewhere in person.

### What's so bad about being connected?

Technology puts great things at our fingertips and allows us more freedom and information than ever before. But danger lurks there too.

### Obsessive Compulsive Disorder –

Obsession compulsive disorder is clinically defined as “the need to check things repeatedly or perform routines repeatedly, and being unable to control either the thoughts or actions for more than a few minutes.” People have a hard time going on a “technology diet.” Putting down the phone for more than a few minutes feels impossible. Accidentally leaving the house for the day without our smart phones is cause for panic. Although for most people the

symptoms don't rise to the level of a clinical disorder, the discomfort felt by being without your device may indicate an unhealthy level of dependence.

**Manners** – Cell phones are so commonplace that The Emily Post Institute has published rules for etiquette regarding their use in many situations. A few of their rules include: Don't make or take calls from a library, theater, church, or from your table in a restaurant; do watch your language, especially when others can overhear you; don't text during class or work meetings; and do turn off your phone if it will be interrupting a conversation or activity.

**Family Time** – Interacting with a phone means our attention is taken away from the present, the here and now. We are involved, but not with the people or the world around us. On the phone at the family dinner table? Watching the game on the phone while at someone's



## About Your EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit set up by your employer to assist you in dealing with personal concerns that may affect your work or home life. Use of the EAP is confidential and free to you and your immediate family members.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.paseap.com>

Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.

~ Christian Louos Lange



recital? Texting during the soccer game and missing your daughter scoring a goal? Have to ask someone to repeat their question because you were focused on your phone? These are just a few indicators that you might be devaluing your experiences in real world by spending too much time in the electronic world.

**Physical Dangers** – Distracted driving (including texting or using the phone while driving) resulted in 3179 deaths in 2014 and contributed to over 431,000 vehicular injuries (2014 FCC Report). Dangers are not limited to distracted driving. Physical dangers also include health and wellness troubles such as mindless eating, lower physical activity, self-esteem issues, and poor sleep quality, resulting from too much screen time. Excessive use of smart phones also causes “text neck”, the result of constantly bending our heads downward to view the screens of the phones when texting, reading and emailing. Pedestrian accidents are also on the rise as people walk and talk or text, unaware of their surroundings.

### What can we do?

The thought of unplugging from the

electronic world can send shivers down the spine. However, mindfully choosing when to use the phone and when not to use it can give us more power over our schedules and our lives. Controlling how we use our smart phones will help us to live in the moment, experiencing our world in ways that no app can offer, and to connect meaningfully with others around us. Some ideas to consider:

**Keep a log for a day** of how many times you access your phone for any reason. This is your reality check. How many times does an alert, incoming message or email, or phone call, distract you from what you are doing or interrupt a conversation with someone face-to-face?

**Ban the phone from the dinner table** so you can interact with those close to you.

**Set a time limit for using social sites** such as Facebook and Twitter. Connecting electronically is great sometimes, but don't use that as a replacement for interacting in the real world. Set up a coffee date with someone instead of Facetiming them.

**Focus on your other senses.** Instead of squeezing in a quick game of Words with Friends, close your eyes and spend a few minutes soaking in some sunlight or taking in the sounds and smells around you. Reconnect with the real world.

**Let the people you are with know how important they are to you...**let the phone call go to voicemail. Have an entire conversation face to face, not in text snippets.

In the end, the quality of life you experience outside the electronic world is up to you. Don't let your smart phone disconnect you from the rest of your world and life. There is so much to



experience, so much to do, so many wonderful people to know! If you are concerned about how your use of technology impacts you, or if you are concerned for someone else (such as a child, a spouse or friend), your EAP, Personal Assistance Services, can help you devise strategies to manage your use of smart phones and other technologies that may be impacting your ability to enjoy a rich and satisfying life.

## Featured Service: Parenting consultation

Caregivers of children can receive telephonic consultation with a team of consultants whose expertise includes child development, behavior modification, speech-language, sensory processing, education (both special and gifted), and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) processes. The parenting consultants provide information and guidance in understanding typical and atypical development and suggest strategies and resources to address those concerns.

Examples of what our team of professionals can provide include:

- Information on discipline, sleep issues, reinforcement strategies, potty training and temper tantrums
- Guidance in determining if overall behavior is typical for the child's age and environment
- Assistance in identifying the potential cause(s) of behavior patterns
- Simple, positive parenting strategies that really work
- Information on developmental milestones such as language development, motor skills, sensory perception, and feeding skills
- Guidance and resources to determine when school age children may need an Individualized Education Plan
- Assistance in advocating for special or gifted services for children in day-care and school settings



**A Service of Your EAP • (800) 356-0845**