

Harmful Effects of Smartphones on Kids

A Normalized Addiction:

- 50% of teenagers self-reported feeling addicted to their own phone.
- 78% reported checking their phone hourly or more.
- Multiple studies link addictive relationships to smartphones to mental health issues in teens, such as depression, anxiety, and disrupted sleep.
- Nearly 50% of children 8 and younger have their own tablet and spend on average 2.25 hours a day looking at screens.
- Roughly 89% of smartphone users experience Phantom Vibration Syndrome, which is related to over-involvement and a dependency with one's cell phone.

Troubling Mental Development:

- Regular use of mobile devices was significantly linked to conduct problems and hyperactivity/inattention.
- Constant phone use makes teens' developing brains more vulnerable to both addiction and mental health crises.
- Excessive smartphone use and recreational internet use have a negative influence on the life satisfaction levels of students. These students experience boredom in their leisure time and don't know how to manage it.

In the Classroom:

- Allowing students to have phones in the classroom negatively impacts test scores and long-term learning retention.
- Multitasking between smartphones and classwork generally finds negative effects on learning effectiveness and task completion.
- Smartphones and Smartwatches distract students and negatively impact their reaction times, performance, enjoyment of focal tasks, and cognitive capacity.

Social Isolation:

- Smartphone addiction leads to emotional, social, and sexual function disorders, psychiatric disorders and anxiety, introversion, and increased depression.
- Teens become gradually less interested in social activities, narrowing social environments, daily life problems, and weakening in-family communication.
- Empathy is reduced due to screen time restricting children's ability to read faces and learn social skills.

Cognitive Dysfunction:

- Adolescents who frequently spend time on screens have shown reduced connectivity among subcortical, frontal, and parietal areas involved in attentional and control networks.
- Spending more time on screens increases the likelihood to experience difficulties in regulating their behaviors (e.g., sustaining attention, inhibitory control, planning), which increases impulsive tendencies.
- Constant stimulation makes it increasingly difficult to focus on repetitive activities which require heightened attention and planning capabilities.

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Summaries of Recent Headlines Regarding Student Cellphone Use

Schools clash with parents over bans on student cellphones:

In 2009, around 90% of public schools prohibited cellphone use but this shrank to 65% in 2016. Due to growing concerns, restrictions were in place at 76% of public schools. California and Tennessee are among the most recent to pass laws allowing schools to prohibit phones. The message is not to say cell phones are evil, but to make sure students are educated about healthy habits with them.

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50509750/schools-clash-with-parents-over-bans-on-student-cellphones>

Youth mental health is in crisis. Are schools doing enough:

Student mental health reached crisis levels last year. The pandemic highlighted the fragility of mental health in youth, showing an increase in depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. 44% of high school students said they experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness during the pandemic. A lingering impact on schools is the negative effects of isolation and remote learning on students' emotional health.

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50459280/youth-mental-health-is-in-crisis-are-schools-doing-enough>

Cellphone bans in public schools are trending nationwide:

In a cell phone-free environment, schools can increase classroom engagement. "When you tell students to simply not have cellphones in class, that is something that still needs to be enforced, and without fair and consistent enforcement, a whole bunch of other problems can be created (e.g., distractions from learning, cheating on tests, coordination of violence, cyberbullying)"

<https://tennesseestar.com/2022/10/30/cell-phone-bans-in-public-schools-are-trending-nationwide/>

Too many texts. Cellphone experiment shows impact on learning:

Research shows that students check their phones on average every 15 minutes, however, once a student is distracted, it can take upwards of 23 minutes to fully re-engage in the class. Cellphones don't only distract kids; they also create anxiety. Kids feel that they are going to miss out on something if they aren't constantly online. In 40 minutes, 30 students received a collective 662 notifications. So many disruptions make it hard to focus on the curriculum.

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50411773/too-many-texts-cellphone-experiment-shows-impact-on-learning>

Here's why Gov. Spencer Cox wants Utah classrooms to be cellphone free:

45% of 13-to-17-year-olds are chronically online, and 97% use at least one social media platform, such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, or Instagram. Greater nighttime use, emotional investment, and overall social media use were linked to worse sleep quality and greater levels of depression and anxiety. Kids are increasingly turning to social media for connections, and spending less time with family, schools, and community groups.

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50497032/heres-why-gov-spencer-cox-wants-utah-classrooms-to-be-cellphone-free>

Violent viral social media threats Continue to impact Utah schools:

Granger High School Principal David Dunn said the school had been “inundated with rumors circulation on social media about a possible threat to our school.” Alpine School District sent an email to Orem High School families warning of similar social media posts that alluded to the school being “shot up.” School officials stress the need for parents to be aware of their kid’s social media presence, even suggesting taking them off those platforms if needed.

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50313243/violent-viral-social-media-threats-continue-to-impact-utah-schools>

Parent social media use impacts teens' mental health:

Those who routinely browsed social media were much more likely to be in the highest depression group, with 86% of females and 79% of males being in the highest depression category. Similarly, about 10% of teens are depressed when their parent uses social media at a low level, compared to nearly 40% of teens being depressed at the highest levels of parent social media use. 54% of adolescents say that their school isn't doing a good job teaching them media literacy skills. Only 14 states in the United States have taken significant legislative action to include quality media literacy education for K-12 students.

<https://wheatley.byu.edu/report-teaching-by-example>

Percentage of public schools with various safety and security measures:

In the school year 2009-10, 93.4% of schools limited access to social networking sites on school computers, down to 89.1 in 2015-16. Likewise, in the school year 2009-10, 90.9% of schools prohibited non-academic use of cell phones and text messaging devices in classrooms, down to 65.8% in 2015-16.

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_233.50.asp