

MOBILE MENTAL WELLNESS

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's breakthrough changed the way we interact with each other and the world around us. That evolution continues today. It's hard to believe that the touch-tone, push-button phones of the 1960s led to the digital keypads we text with today. The move from being tethered to a home base to a wireless mobile phone allows for constant interaction and communication. Today, cell phones are used for so much more than a simple phone call. We rely fully on these devices to perform many of the tasks in our daily lives. As our need to continually be connected has increased, so has the psychological and moral implications. So, how much is too much?



Mobile use in Canada is one of the highest in the world, with over 30 million mobile subscribers. The statistics vary depending on the device used; however, research states that the average Canadian spends approximately 2 hours on mobile devices. Millennials spend an average of 3.2 hours on mobile devices per day – equivalent to a whole day by the end of the week.

IS THERE A COST TO ALL OF THIS COMMUNICATION?

We have become slaves to the devices we thought would be tools for managing our time more efficiently, freeing up time to spend with those we love or to perhaps participate in activities we enjoy. Instead, our lives are ruled by ringtones and notifications that remind us of our constant connection and the need to view and respond immediately to demands. While many of us can self-regulate and control our impulses in other areas of our lives, the need to stay connected can lead to excessive phone use, and with each ring or chime comes a stronger urge to act. This desire to respond activates a dopamine response in the brain, much like in Pavlov's dogs.

HOW MUCH USE IS TOO MUCH USE?

It's a difficult and personal measurement! Even the experts haven't decided how much is too much. Research into smartphone use is a fairly new area of development and long-term data has yet to be seen. The Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) is used by professionals to assess smartphone addiction by looking at 6 factors: daily life disturbance, positive anticipation, withdrawal, internet-oriented relationship, overuse, and tolerance. Excessive smartphone use has been linked to psychological disturbances such as anxiety, lack of sleep, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and relationship problems.



QUESTIONS TO SELF-ASSESS YOUR USE

- ? Do you find yourself spending more time on your cell phone than you realize?
- ? Do you communicate more via text, social media, or email rather than in person?
- ? Do you sleep with your cell phone nearby?
- ? Does the use of your phone decrease your productivity?
- ? Do you feel anxious if you are without your phone for even a short period of time?
- ? When you hear a notification, do you feel an intense urge to respond?



WHO'S IN CONTROL – YOU OR YOUR DEVICE?

Manage your device and improve the quality of your life!

Limit your notifications.

The fewer notifications you receive, the less likely you will have the urge to pick up your phone. You'll be retraining your brain's neurotransmitters to respond to every ring, ding, and chime. Be patient with yourself. Change takes time.

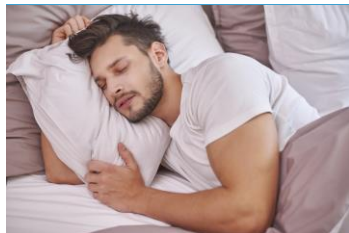
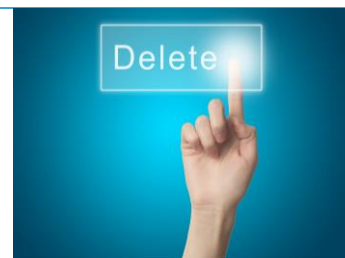


Set boundaries on use.

Set guidelines on phone usage to prevent the phone from interrupting your personal life and relationships. Consider restricting phone use at the dinner table, in the bedroom, and during recreational time, and encourage face-to-face communication when possible. You'll be setting a positive example for those around you!

Delete unnecessary apps.

Do you really need to be on EVERY social media platform? Checking social media is becoming a natural reflex. Consider deleting all apps from your phone and use them only on a computer. If that makes you uncomfortable, choose the platform you use most to communicate with friends to keep on your phone, but limit the time you spend on it. Don't get caught in the rabbit hole!



Turn it off before bed.

Better yet, remove the phone from the bedroom completely. Not only will you sleep better, but you will limit your exposure to harmful EMFs (Electromagnetic Fields). Sleep soundly.

Sources [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3076301/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3076301/) | [psychiatryadvisor.com/home/topics/anxiety/nomophobia-the-modern-day-pathology/](https://www.psychiatryadvisor.com/home/topics/anxiety/nomophobia-the-modern-day-pathology/)
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