Watch Out: Cell Phones Can Be Addictive
Too much dependence on your smartphone isn’t smart
By Kathiann Kowalski
2014

Dr. James Roberts is marketing professor and the author of a study about cell phone addiction that appeared in the August 2014 Journal of Behavioral Addictions. Here, Kathiann Kowalski of Science News for Students covers the results of his study.

The average college student uses a smartphone for about nine hours each day. That's longer than many of those students spend sleeping. In fact, such extended cell phone use shows that the technology could become an addiction, according to a new study. An addiction is a type of uncontrolled and unhealthy habit.

It's well known that people can become addicted to drugs, such as alcohol, narcotics and the nicotine in cigarettes. What's not so well known: “People can be addicted to behaviors,” says James Roberts. He's a marketing professor at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Roberts also was the lead author of the new study. It appears in the August Journal of Behavioral Addictions.

Some cell phone users show the same symptoms that a drug addict might have, Roberts explains. Certain people use smartphones to lift their moods. And it may take more and more time on those phones to provide the same level of enjoyment.

For such people, losing a phone or having its battery die could cause anxiety or panic. That's withdrawal, says Roberts.

Too much phone use can interfere with normal activities or cause conflicts with family and other people, he adds. Yet despite these social costs, people may not cut back on their heavy phone use. Indeed, he says, people might be unable to stop on their own.

The new study asked college students how much time they spent on different phone activities. It also asked them how much they agreed or disagreed with statements suggesting possible addiction. “I spend more time than I should on my cell phone,” said one such statement. “I get agitated when my cell phone is not in sight,” said another. (Agitated means nervous or troubled.) The more calls someone made, the more likely they were to show signs of addiction.

The data also differed a bit for men and women.
Among men, for instance, signs of a possible addiction showed a positive link, or correlation, with time spent on a Bible app and apps for reading books. As use of either app increased, so did the risk of addiction. Men’s use of social media apps, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, also correlated with risk of addiction.

Women were more likely to show signs of addiction if they often used Pinterest, Instagram, Amazon or apps that let them use their phones like an iPod. Apps for the Bible, Twitter, Pandora and Spotify showed an inverse correlation. That is, heavy use of those apps was linked to a lower risk of phone addiction.

A correlation does not prove that one factor causes another. But those links can provide helpful clues. Roberts says the study’s results point to the types of rewards each gender might seek from cell phone use. For instance, “men use technology — cell phones in particular — more for entertainment and information,” Roberts notes.

“Women use the phone more for maintaining and nurturing social relationships,” he says. Those types of activities often take more time. And, on average, women did use phones longer each day than men did.

But simply because people used their phones a lot does not mean they were addicted.

Tracii Ryan is a psychologist at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She’s also the lead author of a report on Facebook addiction in the same issue of the Journal of Behavioral Addictions. “Withdrawal and excessive use are certainly two legitimate symptoms of addiction,” she notes. But, she adds, “They are not the only two that would be required for a diagnosis.”

Roberts agrees. However, he points out, there isn’t a good scale yet for measuring all of the factors behind cell phone addiction.

Ryan makes a similar point about studies on Facebook addiction. “Researchers have not always measured Facebook addiction using all of the accepted symptoms of addiction,” she says. “More consistent research is needed.”

Yet Ryan’s report offers insight into the main reasons why people use Facebook. Some want to interact with friends. Some want to pass time. Some want entertainment. And some people seek companionship.

“Any one of these motivations might cause a lift in mood, which then leads to Facebook addiction,” Ryan says. Someone might turn to Facebook to relieve loneliness, for example. But that person might use the site so much that it causes problems.

“The important point to take away from both studies is that technology use can become addictive for some people,” says Ryan.

As researchers keep asking questions, ask yourself some, too: How much time do you spend with your phone or other technologies? What activities do you use them for — and why? Do you use the technology when you should be paying attention in class or to other things? And how easily can you go a day — or even a week — without a phone or logging onto a social media or networking site?
Remember, the researchers say: Technology helps when it's a tool — not when it is an unhealthy addiction.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best summarizes the author’s purpose for including the statistic in the first sentence of the article?
   A. To entertain the reader with a shocking fact
   B. To introduce the idea of cell phone addiction
   C. To persuade the reader to stop using technology, such as cell phones
   D. To introduce an idea that will later be disproven with evidence

2. According to the article, what are the “social costs” of cell phone usage? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

3. PART A: According to the article, addictions to certain behaviors occur when:
   A. People have no other options for ways to pass their time.
   B. People repeatedly ignore signs that they are truly addicted to a behavior.
   C. People rely on something to relieve their problems or uplift their mood.
   D. People fail to read reports and research about addiction.

4. PART B: Copy a piece of evidence from the article that supports your answer to Part A.
5. PART A: Which of the following statements best summarizes the way that the survey data on cell phone addiction differed between men and women?
   A. The more time men spend on their phone, the more likely they are to be addicted to them. The more time women spend on their phone, the more likely they are to not be addicted.
   B. The results on cell phone addiction for women vary by which apps they are using. For men, increased time spent on a cell phone is correlated with addiction.
   C. Men tend to prefer apps that help them maintain relationships and socialize with new people.
   D. Women tend to prefer apps that have to do with shopping or listening to music.

6. PART B: Copy a piece of evidence from the text that supports your answer to Part A.

7. PART A: Tracii Ryan would most likely agree with which of the following statements?
   A. There is no clear evidence that cell phones are addictive.
   B. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that shows that cell phone are clearly addictive—especially for teens and men.
   C. The evidence on cell phone research was flawed; new experiments should be done to replace old data.
   D. There is some compelling research showing that cell phones can be addictive, but more is needed to diagnose a patient as an “addict.”

8. PART B: Copy a piece of evidence from the text that supports your answer to Part A.
9. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes the author’s purpose for writing this article?
   
   A. The author is trying to warn readers about the risks of excessive cell phone usage.
   B. The author is trying to challenge a widely accepted view that cell phones are harmless.
   C. The author wants to persuade university leaders to adopt policies that regulate cell phone usage on college campuses.
   D. The author wants to express a neutral report about recent findings related to cell phone addiction.

10. PART B: Copy a piece of evidence from the text that supports your answer to Part A.
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. How can behaviors be addictive? Explain.

2. What are some other examples of addictive behaviors not mentioned in the article? List them.

3. One premise of the article is that social networking sites, like Facebook and Instagram, make us happier and more social. Do you agree with this premise? Explain your answer.

4. What are the costs and benefits of smartphone technology? Use evidence from this text, your own experience, and other art, literature, or history in your answer.
Fish Cheeks
By Amy Tan
1987

Amy Tan (born 1952) is an American writer whose work often provides insight into the experiences of Chinese Americans and mother-daughter relationships. While her parents emigrated from China, Tan herself was born in Oakland, California. As you read, take notes on how the author’s use of imagery contributes to the overall tone.

I fell in love with the minister’s son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister’s family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns.\(^1\) The kitchen was littered with appalling\(^2\) mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

And then they arrived — the minister’s family and all my relatives in a clamor\(^3\) of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

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1. A prawn is a common name, used particularly in the United Kingdom and Ireland, for large swimming crustaceans or shrimp.
2. Appalling (adjective): causing shock, disgust, or alarm
3. Clamor (noun): loud and confusing noise
Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. “Amy, your favorite,” he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. “It’s a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied,” explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, “You want to be the same as American girls on the outside.” She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. “But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame.”

And even though I didn’t agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening’s dinner. It wasn’t until many years later — long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert — that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How does the narrator's description of the cod in paragraph 3 impact the tone of the passage? [RL.4]
   A. She describes it as “slimy” and pathetic, which contributes to the angry tone of the passage.
   B. She describes it as “slimy” with “bulging eyes,” which contributes to the horrified tone of the passage.
   C. She describes it as pleading with big “bulging eyes,” which contributes to the pitying tone of the passage.
   D. She describes it as pleading not to be cooked, which contributes to the mocking tone of the passage.

2. How does the narrator's point of view affect how the events are described in the passage? [RL.6]
   A. She is nervous to have the boy she likes over for Christmas dinner, and so the text focuses entirely on the boy's reactions.
   B. She is bored with her family's old Chinese traditions and wants to try new modern customs, and this affects how she focuses on being more “American.”
   C. She is excited to have the minister's son over for Christmas, and this excitement causes her to criticize every little detail of her mother's cooking.
   D. She is embarrassed by her family's Chinese customs, and this shame influences how she describes the food and her family's behavior.

3. PART A: What does the word “despair” mean as used in paragraph 5? [RL.4]
   A. shock
   B. misery
   C. frustration
   D. disgust

4. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
   A. “Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.” (Paragraph 4)
   B. “My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table” (Paragraph 5)
   C. “I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.” (Paragraph 6)
   D. “how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner” (Paragraph 8)

5. What does paragraph 8 reveal about the narrator's character development? [RL.3]
   A. After the dinner, she realizes that the minister's son is not as friendly as she thought.
   B. As an adult, she regrets trying to fit in with other Americans and losing her identity.
   C. Years later, she learns to appreciate her family and her Chinese American identity.
   D. Years later, she learns to love her mother's cooking, which she previously hated.
6. In paragraph 7, Amy’s mother says to her, “You want to be the same as American girls on the outside... But inside you must always be Chinese.” How does this quote contribute to the overall meaning of the story?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.


2. In the context of this text, what makes you who you are? Is it possible to change your identity? Should you try? Explain.

3. Although they are a family, the narrator feels as if she doesn’t belong. In the context of this story, what makes a family? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
Henry Adams’ Testimony Before Congress
By Henry Adams
1880

Henry Adams (1843-?) was born into slavery. He received his freedom in 1865 in Mississippi, where he stayed briefly after the end of the war as a sharecropper. The sharecropping system began after slavery ended: sharecroppers would farm land and receive a share of the crops as payment. Adams then moved to Louisiana where he became a successful traveling salesman before enlisting in the U.S. army. In 1880, Adams traveled to Washington D.C. to provide testimony to a Senate Committee on the migration of African-Americans out of the South. In this excerpt from his testimony, he discusses his life as a sharecropper just after the Civil War. The following text also contains some language that is offensive. As you read, take notes on how Henry Adams was treated by his employer as he worked as a sharecropper.

The white men read a paper to all of us colored people telling us that we were free and could go where we pleased and work for who we pleased. The man I belonged to told me it was best to stay with him. He said, “The bad white men was mad with the Negroes because they were free and they would kill you all for fun.” He said, stay where we are living and we could get protection from our old masters.

I told him I thought that every man, when he was free, could have his rights and protect themselves. He said, “The colored people could never protect themselves among the white people. So you had all better stay with the white people who raised you and make contracts with them to work by the year for one-fifth of all you make. And next year you can get one-third, and the next you maybe work for one-half you make. We have contracts for you all to sign, to work for one-twentieth you make from now until the crop is ended, and then next year you all can make another crop and get more of it.”

I told him I would not sign anything. I said, “I might sign to be killed. I believe the white people is trying to fool us.” But he said again, “Sign this contract so I can take it to the Yankees1 and have it recorded.” All our colored people signed it but myself and a boy named Samuel Jefferson. All who lived on the place was about sixty, young and old.

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1. Yankee is a slang term for people from northern U.S. states. This is likely a reference to the people who administered the Freedmen’s Bureau.
On the day after all had signed the contracts, we went to cutting oats. I asked the boss, “Could we get any of the oats?” He said, “No; the oats were made before you were free.” After that he told us to get timber\(^2\) to build a sugar-mill to make molasses.\(^3\) We did so. On the 13th day of July 1865 we started to pull fodder.\(^4\) I asked the boss would he make a bargain to give us half of all the fodder we would pull. He said we may pull two or three stacks and then we could have all the other. I told him we wanted half, so if we only pulled two or three stacks we would get half of that. He said, “All right.” We got that and part of the corn we made. We made five bales of cotton\(^5\) but we did not get a pound of that. We made two or three hundred gallons of molasses and only got what we could eat. We made about eight-hundred bushels\(^6\) of potatoes; we got a few to eat. We split rails\(^7\) three or four weeks and got not a cent for that.

In September I asked the boss to let me go to Shreveport. He said, “All right, when will you come back?” I told him “next week.” He said, “You had better carry a pass.” I said, “I will see whether I am free by going without a pass.”

I met four white men about six miles south of Keachie, De Soto Parish.\(^8\) One of them asked me who I belonged to. I told him no one. So him and two others struck me with a stick and told me they were going to kill me and every other Negro who told them that they did not belong to anyone. One of them who knew me told the others, “Let Henry alone for he is a hard-working nigger and a good nigger.” They left me and I then went on to Shreveport. I seen over twelve colored men and women, beat, shot and hung between there and Shreveport.

Sunday I went back home. The boss was not at home. I asked the madame,\(^9\) “where was the boss?” She says, “Now, the boss; now, the boss! You should say ‘master’ and ‘mistress’ — and shall or leave. We will not have no nigger here on our place who cannot say ‘mistress’ and ‘master.’ You all are not free yet and will not be until Congress sits, and you shall call every white lady ‘missus’ and every white man ‘master.’”

During the same week the madame takin’ a stick and beat one of the young colored girls, who was about fifteen years of age and who is my sister, and split her back. The boss came next day and take this same girl (my sister) and whipped her nearly to death, but in the contracts he was to hit no one any more. After the whipping a large number of young colored people taken a notion to leave. On the 18th of September I and eleven men and boys left that place and started for Shreveport. I had my horse along. My brother was riding him, and all of our things was packed on him. Out come about forty armed\(^10\) men (white) and shot at us and takin’ my horse. Said they were going to kill ever’ nigger they found leaving their masters; and taking all of our clothes and bed-clothing and money. I had to work away to get a white man to get my horse.

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2. a large piece of wood used for construction
3. a thick, sweet, brown liquid made from sugar
4. food given to livestock
5. A bale is a large unit of a material to be shipped.
6. A bushel is a measurement of 64 pints for dry goods.
7. Splitting rails means constructing split-rail fences that form zig-zag patterns.
8. In Louisiana, parishes are areas that resemble counties.
9. the boss’s wife
10. Arms (noun): weapons
Then I got a wagon and went to peddling, and had to get a pass, according to the laws of the parishes, to do so. In October I was searched for pistols and robbed of $250 by a large crowd of white men and the law would do nothing about it. The same crowd of white men broke up five churches (colored). When any of us would leave the white people, they would take everything we had, all the money that we made on their places. They killed many hundreds of my race when they were running away to get freedom.

[10] After they told us we were free — even then they would not let us live as man and wife together. And when we would run away to be free, the white people would not let us come on their places to see our mothers, wives, sisters, or fathers. We was made to leave or go back and live as slaves. To my own knowledge there was over two thousand colored people killed trying to get away after the white people told us we were free in 1865. This was between Shreveport and Logansport.

"Henry Adams' Testimony Before Congress" by Henry Adams (1880) is in the public domain.

11. to try to sell something by going from house to house or place to place
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the main idea of the text?
   A. Even after receiving their freedom, black sharecroppers and their families continued to be treated as if they were slaves.
   B. White landowners used fear and violence to force freedmen and their families to return to a life of slavery.
   C. Freedmen in Shreveport encountered more prejudice and violence than other areas in the South after the abolition of slavery.
   D. Henry Adams likely would have experienced better treatment as a sharecropper if he had worked for someone other than his former master.

2. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?
   A. “The white men read a paper to all of us colored people telling us that we were free and could go where we pleased and work for who we pleased.” (Paragraph 1)
   B. “All our colored people signed it but myself and a boy named Samuel Jefferson. All who lived on the place was about sixty, young and old.” (Paragraph 3)
   C. “I told him we wanted half, so if we only pulled two or three stacks we would get half of that. He said, ‘All right.’ We got that and part of the corn we made.” (Paragraph 4)
   D. “You all are not free yet and will not be until Congress sits, and you shall call every white lady ‘missus’ and every white man ‘master.’” (Paragraph 7)
   E. “The boss came next day and take this same girl (my sister) and whipped her nearly to death, but in the contracts he was to hit no one any more.” (Paragraph 8)
   F. “On the 18th of September I and eleven men and boys left that place and started for Shreveport. I had my horse along.” (Paragraph 8)

3. Which of the following describes Henry Adams's main purpose in his testimony?
   A. to provide suggestions for how sharecroppers’ work and payment could be fairer
   B. to compare his experiences as a slave with his experiences as a sharecropper
   C. to show the different problems blacks faced, even after being freed
   D. to show how his life improved after he become a freedman

4. How does Henry Adams' conversation with the madame in paragraph 7 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
   A. It shows that the madame refused to accept or acknowledge Henry's freedom.
   B. It provides an example of the verbal harassment that Henry received.
   C. It emphasizes how slowly Congress put laws into action.
   D. It shows that technically Henry was still a slave.
5. According to Henry Adams, what was the relationship between sharecroppers and their employers?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the context of this text, how has America changed over time? What changes was America going through during Henry Adams’ testimony? What changes do you believe Adams would have wanted to take place?

2. After slavery was abolished, free African Americans still faced serious mistreatment and prejudice. In your opinion, why did hatred against African Americans continue to exist even after slavery ended? What does this period of history teach us about how change happens?
Mother to Son
By Langston Hughes
1922

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an American poet, activist, novelist, and playwright. He is also considered one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, which was the cultural, social, and artistic movement of black artists that took place in Harlem between the end of World War I and the mid-1930s. As you read, take notes on the metaphor and larger message presented in the text.

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

"Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes (1922) is in the public domain.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. In the poem, whom is the speaker addressing and about what?
   A. A mother is telling a story to her child about her own childhood.
   B. A mother is describing for her son the climb up a crystal staircase.
   C. A son is recounting a conversation with his mother about his struggle to earn a comfortable living.
   D. A mother is warning her son about the difficulties of life and the struggle to persevere.

2. Which of the following best explains the significance of the staircase in the poem?
   A. The narrator describes a tiring climb up a beat-up staircase, which represents her persistence through difficulties and challenges in life.
   B. The narrator describes a crystal staircase, which symbolizes her goals and the hard work she has done to accomplish her dreams.
   C. The narrator describes her climb up a dirty staircase that transforms into a crystal stair, which represents her ability to rise above difficulties.
   D. The narrator describes herself going down a staircase that is falling apart, which represents her seeing a difficult life.

3. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes a major theme of the poem?
   A. Never forget your family.
   B. Persevere when life isn't easy.
   C. Hope is the answer to all challenges.
   D. Respect your elders.

4. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
   A. “Well, son, I'll tell you: / Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.” (Lines 1-2)
   B. “It's had tacks in it, / And splinters, / And boards torn up, / And places with no carpet on the floor — / Bare.” (Lines 3-7)
   C. “I'se been a-climbin' on, / And reachin' landin's, / And turnin' corners” (Lines 9-11)
   D. “So boy, don't you turn back. / Don't you set down on the steps / 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard. / Don't you fall now — / For I'se still goin', honey” (Lines 14-18)
5. How does the poem's use of language and free verse contribute to the author's purpose?

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Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In your opinion, do all Americans have equal access to the American Dream? What are some of the factors that could make it easier or harder to achieve happiness in America? Why do you think Harlem Renaissance writers focused on the American Dream?

2. How do we achieve our goals or dreams? How does circumstance, status, and identity factor into this? In the context of this poem, how do people overcome adversity? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

3. In the context of this poem, what is the meaning of family? What do you think it means to be a parent, especially a mother? How do you relate to your parents or guardians when they are trying to give you advice? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.