Is Cell Phone Use a Problem?

What to Know

Your phone connects you to friends, family, entertainment, and knowledge. But sometimes, too much of a good thing can have negative consequences. Spending excessive time on your phone can affect your sleep, focus, relationships, and even your self-esteem. Taking breaks from your phone helps your brain relax and recharge, allowing you to feel more present and enjoy life offline.

What to Do

Read each statement carefully and check any that apply to you.

____ I often lose track of time when using my phone.

____ I've been told by others I'm on my phone too much.

____ I check my phone immediately after waking up and before going to sleep.

____ I feel anxious or irritable if I can't find my phone or check it.

____ I've lied to a parent, teacher, or other adult about my phone use.

____ I use my phone during meals, conversations, or other activities with family or friends.

____ I take my phone into the bathroom with me.

____ I feel like I _need_ to check my phone, even when I'm not expecting anything important.

____ My phone use interferes with my schoolwork, hobbies, or responsibilities.

____ I've tried to reduce my phone use, but I can't do it.

____ I am devastated when someone takes my phone away as a punishment.

____ I get angry when someone comments about me being on my phone.

____ I feel tired during the day because I stayed up late using my phone.

____ I spend more time on my phone than I plan to.

____ I feel distracted or have trouble focusing because of my phone.

____ I feel left out or upset when I see posts or stories from others.

____ I use my phone to avoid uncomfortable feelings or situations.

____ I experience headaches, eye strain, or other physical discomfort after long periods on my phone.

____ Being on my phone makes me happy.

____ Total checkmarks.

- If you checked **6–8 statements**, your phone use might need some attention.

- If you checked **9 or more statements**, your phone use could affect your well-being, and it might be helpful to change your habits.

Try the 30-Minute Challenge. Set a timer for 30 minutes every day and put your phone in another room. Use this time to focus on something you enjoy—reading, drawing, playing sports, or spending time outside. For the next week, fill in the following chart. Write down the date and whether you took a 30-minute break from your phone. Describe what you did instead of using your phone.

Date	Did you take a 30-minute break? Yes / No	What did you do?

Next, commit to creating a "Tech-Free" Zone. Choose times or places you won't use your phone, like during meals, in your bedroom, or while studying. Set a specific time each evening to put your phone away (e.g., one hour before bed). Use that time to relax and prepare for a good night's sleep.

Describe the time and place you'll commit to a "tech-free" zone:

_____

_____

Schedule Your Phone Time. Decide when you'll use your phone and stick to those times. For example, you might allow yourself 15 minutes on social media after finishing homework. Describe what you will do.

_____

_____

_____

Replace Screen Time with Fun Activities. Make a list of activities you enjoy that don't involve screens, like playing a sport, baking, or hanging out with friends in person.

_____

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Track Your Screen Time. Use your phone's settings or a tracking app to monitor how much time you spend on your phone each day. Set a daily goal to reduce your usage. What's your daily goal?

_____

_____

_____

Practice Digital Mindfulness. Before picking up your phone, ask yourself, "Why am I reaching for my phone?" If you're bored or stressed, try a healthier alternative, like stretching or journaling.

Engage a Buddy. Ask a friend or family member to join you in reducing phone use. You can support each other and even make it into a fun challenge. Who will you ask to join you? _____

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

How do I feel when I spend less time on my phone?

_____

_____

_____

What activities bring me the most joy offline?

_____

_____

_____

What small step can I take today to reduce my phone use?

_____

_____

_____

Remember, the goal isn't to give up your phone entirely—it's to find a balance that helps you feel happy, healthy, and in control of your time. Small changes can lead to big improvements.