

TO YOUR HEALTH

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Smartphone Addiction in Older Adults

By Marcia Feldman,
Palliative Care Coordinator

Ever since technology advanced to the point where cell phones are commonplace and we can essentially carry a small computer in our pockets, we have observed that our reliance on them can have negative effects. There have been numerous studies about how cell phones are addicting children, teens and young adults—but what about people over 65? Are we facing the same challenges of being addicted to our smart phones? Let's look at the reasons we use them, explore the research and find ways to cut back on our usage if it's getting to be excessive.

One reason older adults use cell phones is to stay connected to family and loved ones. However sometimes we choose time spent with our phones over face-to-face human connection with those directly in front of us.



Paradoxically, even though we have more access to communication with loved ones, older adults often feel more lonely and isolated when using smart phones.

In a study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the hypothesis is that

"There is a significant positive correlation between mobile phone addiction and sleep quality in the elderly."

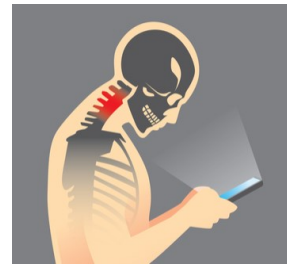
The study goes on to draw a relationship between adverse quality of sleep and depression and loneliness in older adults.

"...excessive cell phone use by the elderly may lead to poor interpersonal relationships, lack of adequate social support, experience less sense of fulfillment, and lower sense of worth, and, therefore, higher levels of depression."

Cell phone addiction doesn't happen by accident. They have been created in a way that rewards the user to stay on them for long periods of time. *"In the context of addictions, certain behaviors (such as using your phone) could lead to your brain producing an abnormal amount of dopamine. This excessive release hijacks the normal systems of pleasure and motivation, changing the way your brain works."* - www.opal.so

Physical Impact of Smartphone Addiction

Eye strain and neck pain may accompany excessive cell phone use. When the head is tilted downward to view a cellphone, it adds weight to the shoulders and spinal cord. *"tilting your head*



15 degrees increases the weight of your head to about 30 pounds, and tilting it 30 degrees increases it to about 40 pounds. -AI Overview

How to recognize the signs of addiction to smartphones

- Lying about smartphone use
- Loved ones expressing concern
- Neglect or trouble completing duties at work, school or home
- More and more time using a phone
- Accidents or injury due to phone use
- Fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Isolation from loved ones
- Angry or irritated if phone use is interrupted
- Getting up at night to check a phone
- Reaching for a phone the moment they are alone or bored.
- Craving access to a smartphone



Recognizing if we have an issue with the time we spend on smartphones is the first step towards choosing to make a change. Here are some ideas about how to reduce our phone usage and

reclaim face-to-face interactions and other activities we enjoy.

How to break the cycle of addiction

- Charge devices outside the bedroom
- Turn off Notifications
- Diversify your activities
- Gradually reduce screen time
- Kick your phone out of the bedroom!
- Delete social media apps
- Prioritize real interactions
- Practice mindfulness
- Participate in physical activities
- Find alternative hobbies
- Establish phone-free zones



<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10360404/>

<https://www.mainspringrecovery.com/blog/how-to-stop-phone-addiction>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/behavioral-addictions/phone-addiction/>

<https://www.opal.so/blog/why-are-phones-so-addictive#:~:text=The%20Science%20behind%20Cell%20Phone%20Addiction&text=In%20the%20context%20of%20addictions,the%20way%20your%20brain%20works.>

Clinic Comings and Goings

In mid-December our Clinic Social Worker, Tracey King unfortunately resigned.



We are happy to announce that Maeve Lobo, LICSW will be returning on a part time basis. Maeve will be back on January 2nd and will be here on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays going forward. Please join us in welcoming her back!



What's in a Name?

After many discussions and brainstorming, we have decided to change the name of Carleton Willard's in-house palliative care program. January marks the 16th year of the program that was formally called the "Living Fully, Dying Well" program. The new name is **LiveWell Comfort Care**. We have chosen this new welcoming name to reflect more accurately the services that we provide. Reverend Alexx has designed a beautiful new logo which is included in our new brochure.