



SMARTPHONE ADDICTION?

If you're a parent who's at one time or another had to de-tether your child or teen from their smartphone, you've probably heard your child emphatically protest with something like this: "NO! You can't take it from me! It's not fair!" Perhaps you've taken the phone away as a discipline tactic. Maybe you wanted your kids to focus on their schoolwork without the smartphone distractions. Or, it could be you told them it's time to get their eyes off their screens to focus on interacting with flesh-and-blood family and friends for a few minutes. Whatever the reason, taking the phone out of their hands and away from their gaze results in pushback that might be evidence of the deeper problem of smartphone addiction.

Since we've only had smartphones since 2007, it's only in recent years that researchers have begun to solve the puzzle regarding our use of these devices and what they do to our brains. Some of the most compelling information regards the way that God has made our brains to release dopamine, the chemical that helps us feel pleasure, provides an intense

feeling of reward, and makes us want to go back for more of what prompted the dopamine release in the first place. Eating good food, engaging in sexual activity, exercise, and positive social interactions all are catalysts for the release of dopamine. . . and that's how smartphone addiction takes root and grows.

If you ever doubted the addictive nature of smartphones and social media apps, sit down and watch the film *The Social Dilemma*. The film's website tells us that "the technology that connects us also controls, manipulates, and distracts us." The film offers a compelling look at how our devices and their apps are designed to trigger the release of dopamine and addict us. Because our kids are at a formative age, they are especially vulnerable to this addictive-by-design nature of smartphones. Perhaps that's why some of the device and app developers interviewed in the film say they won't allow their very own children to have or use a smartphone!

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YOUTH CULTURE

HOT QUOTE

Elle Mills, who became a YouTube star shortly after posting videos as a 12 year-old in 2012. She quit posting 10 years later.

"The peak of my YouTube career didn't always match my childhood fantasy of what this sort of fame might look like. Instead, I was constantly terrified of losing my audience and the validation that came with it."



The New York Times
February 5, 2023

"THE TECHNOLOGY THAT CONNECTS US ALSO CONTROLS, MANIPULATES, AND DISTRACTS US."

- *The Social Dilemma*



According to research from the National Institute of Health, about a quarter of adolescents are social media addicts. Other research says that 45% of our teens report feeling addicted to their smartphone devices. But it's not just a problem for our kids. Six out of ten adults say they couldn't cope without their smartphone if they were unable to use it for just one day. Smartphone addiction is no respecter of persons. We're all susceptible and we must all be on guard as it's only going to increase over the coming years.

While there are many signs of smartphone addiction, here are four of the most common to look for in your child. . . and even in yourself:

- Feeling uneasy, incomplete, and agitated when discontinuing or reducing smartphone use.
- Staying engaged with one's smartphone dominates one's time, thinking, feelings, and behavior.
- Smartphone use interferes with school and work performance.
- Spending more time with your smartphone and social media than with family and real-world friends.

As parents, we can't just sit idly by as smartphones, social media, and technology take over their lives and undermine their well-being. God has called us to protect our kids from harm and to provide for their well-being. And because they are destined to live the rest of their lives in a tech-saturated world, we must invest in their futures by helping them learn how to navigate these tools to the glory of God, rather than to the undermining of themselves.

We encourage you to set time limits on smartphone use, monitor how your kids are using their devices, and create times/spaces where smartphones are put aside. Establish a social media sabbath where one day a week your kids put their smartphones aside. Finally, replace smartphone time with activities with family, friends, and the church youth group. While they may lament these measures now, they will certainly thank you for them later!

WALT MUELLER
CPYU President



FROM THE NEWS

SEXTORTION

The dictionary defines sextortion as the practice of extorting money or sexual favors from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity.

In today's online world, sextortion has become a serious crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them with images of a sexual nature, or sexual favors. Recently, the FBI has sounded the alarm about what has been called an explosive increase in teenage boys being targeted online and sextorted after being tricked into sending sexually explicit pictures. Most of the victims have been between the ages of 14 and 17, with some as young as ten years old being targeted. Parents, don't put a smartphone in the hands of a child or young teen. Be sure your kids know not to talk to strangers online. Let them know that they should report any suspicious messages to you. Finally, let them know that taking, sending, or viewing nudes is wrong.



TRENDS:



Entitlement

One of the most alarming trends in today's youth culture is a growing sense of entitlement. It's especially prevalent among those children and teens living on the receiving end of a silver spoon. On the other end are parents who feed their kids an endless

parade of opportunities, activities, and things - all without ever having to work for any of it. These kids wind up believing that they will never have to work for anything, because, after all, they deserve it. A Harris Interactive Poll found that 90% of parents do think that it's important for their children to work to pay for the things they want. But the reality is that few kids had jobs.

There is a disconnect between the desired end result and what the kids are actually doing. The words of theologian John Wesley are worth teaching to our children: "Work as hard as you can, to make all the money you can, to save as much as you can in order to give away all that you can."



LATEST RESEARCH:

Family Meals

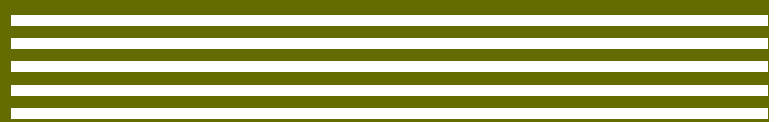
God has made us for relationships, and the primary human relationships for which we've been made are those with our family. It's no secret that one of the primary trends undermining the health of our families has been the loss of a family meal time. Researchers recently listed seven benefits of eating together as a family. First, everyone has better eating habits. One

reason is that eating together keeps us from a fast food diet. Second, it helps the mental health of our kids, lowering their risk of developing eating disorders, drug and alcohol use, aggressiveness, sadness, and suicidal ideation. Third, it curtails weight struggles in adulthood by lowering the risk of obesity. Fourth, children feel supported and more secure in

themselves. Fifth, table conversations improve overall communication skills. Sixth, kids develop resilience to bullying. And seventh, family closeness is built. Parents, eat together, and why not add the benefit of sitting together to read God's Word.



QUICKSTATS



6 out of 10 kids in 5th and 6th grade report their parents have approved and allow them to have a social media account despite those platforms not allowing accounts to children under the age of 13.

(Institute for Family Studies)

In the years between 2011 and 2019, the amount of American Bible readers who used a smartphone to access the Bible grew from 18% to 56%. However, in 2021, 59% of respondents said they still preferred reading a print Bible overall.

(State of the Bible, American Bible Society)

TOP 10



SONGS ON THE BILLBOARD HOT 100

Week of April 1, 2023
Source: Billboard

1. "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus
2. "Last Night" by Morgan Wallen
3. "Kill Bill" by SZA
4. "Creepin'" by Metro Boomin, The Weeknd & 21 Savage
5. "Die For You" The Weeknd & Ariana Grande
6. "Boy's A Liar, Pt. 2" by PinkPantheress & Ice Spice
7. "Anti-Hero" by Taylor Swift
8. "Calm Down" by Rema & Selena Gomez
9. "Players" by Coi Leray
10. "Rock and a Hard Place" by Bailey Zimmerman



SMARTPHONE RULES

by WALT MUELLER

While technology and social media are positive in so many different ways, too much use and being constantly tethered to our devices keeps many of us so engaged with screens that we fail to focus on what really matters. . . our kids. These bad habits not only limit our face-to-face interactions with our kids, but they serve to nurture our children into assuming that they should be doing the same. In order to push back and regain a proper focus, here are some rules to enlist in your own life and home. Try them out and see what happens!

1. Don't engage with your smartphone as long as you are present with and/or in conversation with real flesh and blood human beings. They deserve your full attention.

2. Don't bring your smartphone or screen of any kind to the table. Converse with others over the meal. . . using your eyes, your voice, your ears, and your full attention.

3. Don't sleep with your smartphone on or near your bed. Sleep. Rest. You need it. When you wake up, the world will still be there and you

can tend to your business. And if by some chance the world is no longer there when you wake up... well, you won't need your phone anyway!

4. Make your family room a no-smartphone zone. When you come in the door to your house, put your phone down. Then, go to the room where your family gathers without that electronic distraction. Put that phone out of sight, and pretty soon it will be out of mind.

5. Don't engage with your phone while driving. You'll be doing your passengers and everyone else on the road a huge favor.

6. Take a social media Sabbath. God created us for a rhythm of work and rest. Take one day. . . Sunday maybe? ... and power down. No posts. No comments. No replies. Sure, you can carry your phone with you in order to stay in touch with and be available to family. But forget and walk away from all that other smartphone stuff.

FROM THE WORD

The book of Proverbs is a book about wisdom. In a world where so many competing voices scream for our attention and allegiance, we desperately need wisdom in order to consistently endeavor to follow God's will and God's way. This is true for us as parents and for our kids!

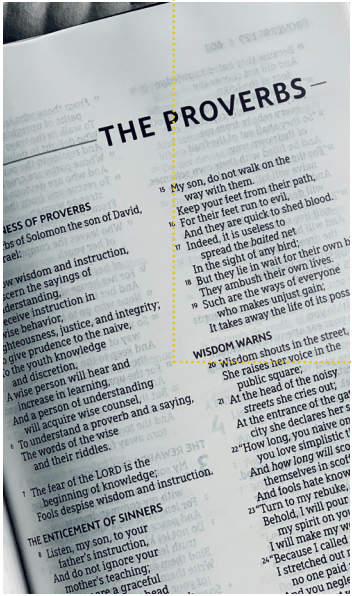
Wisdom is about knowing what to believe and what to do with what we believe. It is about developing skills in discernment so that we can clearly differentiate between right and wrong, and about developing a character that is bent on pursuing right rather than embracing what is wrong. Seeking out and embracing biblical wisdom lead us to maturity by equipping us to live out God's purpose for our lives. That should be the goal of Christian parents for themselves and for their kids.

While the context of Proverbs chapter 5 speaks specifically to the importance of marital faithfulness, there are some general principles that apply to all of life. We must both teach and model what it means to turn our ears to God's wisdom in His Word, as they open our eyes... giving us insight into how we are to live and navigate life in our sinful and fallen world.

Both you and your kids need to know how to sort out and discern truth from error as you face the daily barrage of voices and choices that come your way. Are you taking the time to immerse yourself in God's Word on a daily basis? Are you asking God to show you how His Word applies to your life? Proverbs reminds us that it is God's wisdom that we should seek. It is that wisdom that will enable us to find our way, plan our course, and "maintain discretion."

"My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge."

Proverbs 5:1-2



PODCAST



Youth Culture Matters

A CPYU PODCAST

Youth Culture Matters

is a long-format podcast from CPYU hosted by Walt Mueller.

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT EPISODE 166:

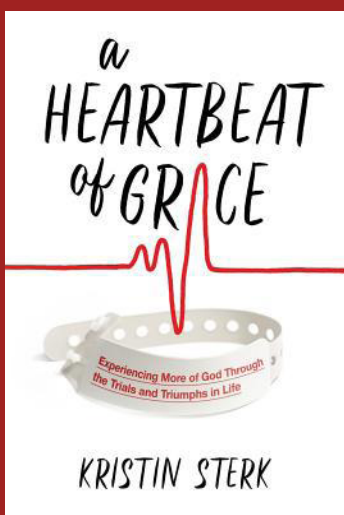
"WALKING WITH THOSE EXPERIENCING GENDER CONFUSION" WITH NICHOLAS BLACK

LISTEN AT WWW.CPYU.ORG/PODCAST

"I had to learn what it meant to find joy and hope in God again, which brought me to a whole new understanding of His unconditional love. When I felt I had nothing left to give, it was God who continued to put His arms underneath mine, lifted me back to my feet, dusted me off, and told me to keep going. Even when He gives and takes away, He truly is a good, good God, worthy of our praise."

- Kristin Sterk

HELPFUL RESOURCES



BOOK

You never think it will be you. You never think it will be you, who lies lifeless on an operating table. You never think it will be you, who struggles to have children due to a medical diagnosis. You never think it will be you, who experiences loss. You just never think it will be you; until it is.

Kristin Sterk was diagnosed with a rare heart condition that statistically speaking, should have taken her life at an early age. Open heart surgery was the only option, but an option that would change the course of her life. That one diagnosis was the beginning of a journey of God's grace. In this gripping memoir, *A Heartbeat of Grace: Experiencing More of God Through the Trials and Triumphs in Life*, Kristin will take you through her emotional journey of deep loss, grief, forgiveness, healing, and miracles.