

# WHAT IS CELL PHONE ADDICTION?

Cell phone addiction, also known as smartphone addiction, is a behavioral addiction like gambling or shopping. It is the excessive use of a smartphone in a way that interferes with daily life. The excessive use most commonly involves being on social media for hours at a time.



Like other addictions, it is not just a matter of having the willpower to put down your phone. Cell phone addiction happens because your brain releases dopamine in response to a pleasurable behavior or experience, such as someone liking a photo you posted online. This activates your brain's reward system, making you want to repeat the action. The more times you experience the behavior, the more dopamine is released and the more driven you are to continue the behavior.

The desire to have that pleasurable experience can keep you on your phone, even when you recognize the negative consequences.



## RESOURCES

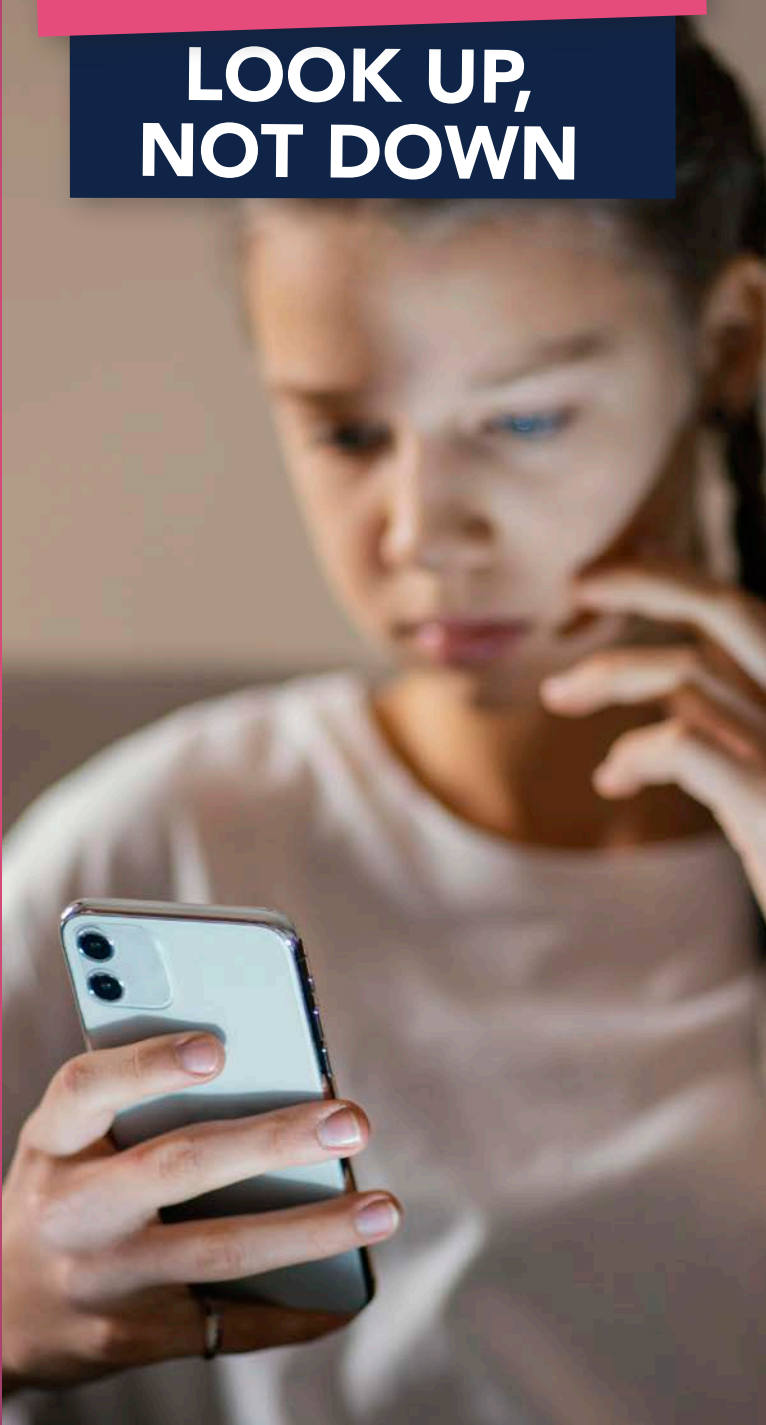
**Common Sense Media**  
[commonsensemedia.org](https://commonsensemedia.org)

**Verizon**  
[verizon.com/articles/cell-phone-addiction](https://verizon.com/articles/cell-phone-addiction)

**Harvard Business Review**  
[hbr.org/2024/02/do-you-have-a-phone-addiction](https://hbr.org/2024/02/do-you-have-a-phone-addiction)

## CELL PHONE ADDICTION:

# LOOK UP, NOT DOWN





## WHY IS CELL PHONE ADDICTION A PROBLEM?

When you consume too much online content, you can experience a variety of negative psychological effects. Some of the most common effects or symptoms of cell phone addiction include:

- ✔ Anxiety
- ✔ Lower self-esteem
- ✔ Depression
- ✔ Body image issues

Beyond these direct negative psychological consequences, there are the costs associated with spending so much time staring at your phone.

For example:

- ✔ Decreased face-to-face social interaction
- ✔ Loss of interest in non-online activities
- ✔ Disrupted sleep
- ✔ Lower grades
- ✔ Physical danger (ex. walking into traffic while looking at your phone)



## WHO IS AT RISK OF CELL PHONE ADDICTION AND WHY?

Smartphones and their apps are designed to hold your attention, so anyone who has a cell phone is at risk of developing an addiction to their device. The addiction may be to a specific app or set of apps, such as social media, or it may be to a particular kind of activity, like gambling. Either way, someone suffers because they cannot put down their phone.

According to one study, people under 20 years old are the most at-risk for cell phone addiction. There are many reasons why teens are at the greatest risk, but you can put them into two broad categories. First, there is the physical factor. Their brains are still developing, which makes them vulnerable to addiction in general. Second, there is the social factor. Teens are naturally more sociable than other age groups. Phone apps are designed to encourage users to keep coming back for social interactions, such as getting positive messages or calls from friends. Also, teens are more sensitive to peer feedback and validation, which can make it harder for them to resist the urge to use their phones.

When you combine these two factors, the result is that teens are more likely to get the hits of dopamine that cause them to feel pleasure, sometimes leading to cell phone addiction.

## HOW TO OVERCOME CELL PHONE ADDICTION

Each situation is different, so if you or someone you know is suffering from cell phone addiction, the best first step is to talk to a health care professional about the best strategy.

To deal with this addiction, you must create healthy boundaries between you and your cell phone. Making it harder for you to use your phone or certain apps can be an important step in getting your phone use under control.



- ✔ Remove the apps that you spend the most time on.
- ✔ Keep your phone in a different room when you go to sleep at night.
- ✔ Change the settings so that you don't receive as many notifications.
- ✔ Focus more time and energy on hobbies or activities that do not involve your phone.

## BY THE NUMBERS

57% of Americans admit to being addicted to their cell phone. The average person spends about 4 to 5 hours on their phone each day.

More than half of American teens spend an average of more than 7 hours a day on their phone.

**If necessary, you can replace your smartphone for a "dumb" phone that only allows you to text or make phone calls.**

