

Addicted to tech

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There's always a reason to pick up your phone

- The family WhatsApp group has kicked off again – mum has discovered memes and she's not afraid to use them whilst dad can't turn off caps lock and is permanently shouting "ARE YOU COMING FOR DINNER???"
- That unknown 0161 phone number is phoning you again to convince you that you were in fact involved in a car accident, even though you don't have a driving license or more importantly, a car.
- Facebook is reminding you that you need to RSVP to an event you have no intention of attending. Go away Tom, no one celebrates their 39th birthday.

But some people find themselves glued to their phone, including [Kirstie Allsopp's children](#), and it feels like every week we're seeing new reports on [how often we spend on our phones](#) (one

full a day a week) and how this excessive device time can be detrimental to our mental health, relationships and sleep cycles.

I'm as guilty as the next person for being on their phone too much but recently I have tried to cut down on unnecessary phone time. I've thought of ways to become less reliant on my phone from deleting the addictive apps, downgrading to a basic phone (think Nokia 3310) or to just kick my phone off a bridge and be done with it. No more memes. No more notifications. Whilst this last option was the most tempting, I quickly realised I still have 9 months left on my contract so the aforementioned bridge kick has been postponed. For now.

I tried installing an app to track how much time I was spending on my phone which turned out to be very successful. This new app drained my battery by lunch time, *technically* stopping me from using my phone. Result!

I started to think, is this really an addiction, is spending a bit of time on my phone really all that bad? A bit of procrastinating never hurt anybody, right?! However, an article in [The Times over the weekend](#) says differently as the UK Addiction Treatment clinic reported that in 2017 they treated 792 people for this very kind of addiction. People reported they felt irritable, anxious or depressed when they can't get on to the internet and even put it before basic needs. In some extreme cases people were even found taking drugs so they could stay up all night playing games or on social media. Yeah, that took a bit of a dark turn, didn't it?

The World Health Organisation don't see over-usage of a phone as an addiction (yet) and instead have recognised this brand new mental health issue as a "gaming disorder". Whilst I'm not quite at the level of pulling an all-nighter to complete Candy Crush, we don't need the WHO to tell us that spending a day every week on our phones can't be good for us.

In an effort to help reduce people's reliance on their devices, Apple as part of this week's iOS 12 update has included a feature called Screen Time. This allows users to see how much time they're spending on their phone, set time limits on using apps and choose times of day when they can't use the apps at all. I'll be using this feature to help reduce my phone time and yes, I fully admit I have that little self-control and I am not unaware of the irony that I need my phone to tell me I'm using my phone too much.

And if all this doesn't work, I'll take a leaf out of Kirstie Allsopp's playbook, kick my phone off a bridge (in 9 months), needlessly destroying an Apple product, which will no doubt lead to a social media backlash from my tens of followers, leading me to quit Twitter, Facebook and addictive smart phones for good.

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