

# How Connected Do You Want To Be?

CONNECTIONS MOBILE SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Are we slaves to technology or are we empowered by it?

Is checking your mobile phone the last item on your nightly checklist and the first thing you do in the morning? Do you sleep with it by your bed? Do you answer texts at 4am? Are you afraid of missing an important email, text or phone call? If yes, you may be one of many people suffering from a psychological syndrome called nomophobia, or the fear of being out of mobile phone contact. The term is an abbreviation for “no-mobile-phone-phobia.”

According to a 2008 study by YouGov, 53 percent of British citizens suffer from acute anxiety when their mobile phones are out of reach. Given how much more essential the smartphone has become in the last 5 years, this must now be a massive understatement. And – who knows? – nomophobia may be even higher in the developing world, where smartphone technology has filled numerous gaps in traditional communications and finance

infrastructures.

## Introvert vs . Extrovert

Connectedness is a very polarizing topic, of course, as being at the constant beck and call of their smartphones provokes acute anxiety in some but not all people. My own sister carries her mobile phone so that she can be in touch with people when she wishes to be; she never answers or may even switch the phone off unless she's waiting for a call. Like my sister, I am predominantly an introvert – which is probably one of the biggest predictors, outside of age and life stage, of how connected you want to be. In her new book, *Quiet*, Susan Cain points out that between one-third and one-half of us are introverts. This can be a challenge in a world powered by extroverts: particularly in the world of marketing communications.

Of course, both groups have specific characteristics and skill sets. Cain describes extroverts as highly reward-sensitive, and more willing to experience pleasure and excitement than introverts. They're fired up by buzz, and love pleasing big audiences. Introverts are better at delayed gratification and are more likely to be satisfied with sitting quietly, thinking and writing. In summary, extroverts love to share and get rewards from recognition. Introverts "have a smaller response, and so go less out of their way to follow up reward cues." Most of us have a mix of both personality types, but I believe that our predisposition to sharing comes from whichever type is most prevalent in our personalities.

There are some people who are particularly disposed to share everything. A recent study published by the British newspaper The Telegraph indicates the top ten most annoying updates which, unfortunately, seem to correlate with the most common updates on my social media feeds. How many of these minicrimes have you committed, and how many annoy you when others do so?

### Top Ten Most Annoying Social Media Updates

1. Diet and exercise boosters

Those who tell you how far they've cycled, how fast they ran and how many pounds they've shed.

## 2. People who share pictures of every meal

People who tell you about every meal are boring enough. These people, for reasons nobody can fathom, also photograph them.

## 3. Cryptic status writers

Some are mysterious: "I can't believe that just happened!" Others are passive aggressive: "Don't you hate it when people promise to do something and then let you down?" One thing's for sure: if you ask them what they're going on about, they'll clam up.

## 4. Game inviters

Those who bombard their friends with requests to play virtual farmers or digital mobsters or whatever Facebook game they're addicted to that day.

## 5. Proud parents

Your child is special and amazing. To you. The rest of us don't need to know about every step, sniffle or funny remark.

## 6. People who share very personal details

"You've got blood coming out of where?" Yes, some people share information that should be reserved for very close friends and trained medical staff only.

## 7. Checker-inners

"Oh, you're mayor of your local cafe? As a special prize, I'm going to unfollow you now."

Congrats.”

## 8. Event spammers

While it's great that you're hosting a hackathon to save badgers, you probably only need to tweet about it a couple of times.

## 9. Constant engagers who like and comment

Liking a status update or commenting on a post can be supportive and engaging. It can also feel a bit like stalking if you do it too much.

## 10. Self-promoters

I would really like your business to succeed. I would like that almost as much as I would like you to stop talking about it.

Source: [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk)

## Slaves to the machine

Does all this sharing do anything for us other than fuel dopamine levels in the brains of extroverts? Evgeny Morozov, author of *To Save Everything, Click Here: Technology, Solutionism, and the Urge to Fix Problems that Don't Exist*, thinks the direction we're heading will ultimately be a negative one. Smart technologies will, in his view, create a kind of adult Disneyland where we can't make our own decisions, and where we are reliant on technology to make choices for us. He laments the coming of the much talked-about “smart fork,” which will tell us if we’re eating too fast. Or BinCam, which snaps and posts a photo to Facebook every time you use your recycling bin. Will our über-connectedness ultimately make us slaves to the machine? Personally, I’m not worried yet. A recent electronic power outage taught me to love Twitter by candlelight. The friendly updates on Twitter provided by the UK Power Networks customer service team throughout the four-hour blackout meant that I was much more in touch with what happening than in the pre-Twitter world. And

sharing my impressions on Twitter meant that I actually “met” and chatted to several people who work in media, live in my area and were going through a shared experience. How much individuals decide to share may become the ultimate segmentation methodology of the 21st century. My view of new technologies is that the most successful ones are those that fulfill a natural human desire to come together as a community, as people have throughout most of human history. Living alone, or far from family and friends, is a late 20th-century aberration: smart sharing technologies bring us back together. That’s a wonderful thing: as long as you can turn it off at will, and you stay smarter than the technology.

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