



Cell phones are an almost inevitable part of our lives. Unless you're living off the grid or still standing by your flip phone, it's likely that you use your cell phone throughout the day for many different reasons—connecting with friends and loved ones, doing work, being entertained, and getting information.

But when does your cell phone go from being a valuable resource to a major health risk? This month we spoke with Timothy Logsdon, a local counselor specializing in addiction and substance abuse who also works with clients dealing with unhealthy behaviors around cell phone use. Logsdon helped us understand the consequences of unhealthy cell phone behaviors and shared some tips for developing a healthier relationship to your phone.

Unhealthy cell phone habits CAN negatively impact your mental health.

"One of the myths I often have to tackle with clients is that cell phones couldn't be a problem because they're so commonplace," Logsdon says. "In fact, what this myth denies is the fact that negative impacts of cell phones are multiplying *because* they are so pervasive. There's a feeling that 'everyone is using one, so there can't be a real problem.'" This misunderstanding of the consequences of unhealthy cell phone habits is leading to dire social impacts. "Our society's mental health is declining," Logsdon says, and more and more individuals are pointing to cell phones as the cause of that decline.

Tips for Healthy Cell Phone Use

1. Set boundaries. Set personal limits to your cell phone use,

and use the usage data from your phone to help hold yourself accountable. What does your usage look like? When and where can you cut down on screen time? Make a plan and try to stick to it.

2. Get enough sleep. If you can, keep your phone out of the bedroom if you know you'll be tempted to use it during the evening when you're supposed to be sleeping.

3. Make your cell phones work for your mental health. Technology can be very good for your health, depending on how you use it. "Meditation can help you in every area of your life and impact your emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing," Logsdon says. "Use a meditation app to help you relax and tackle stress." Not all screen time is bad, so do the work to identify when and where it can be helpful.

4. Acknowledge the impact of your cell phone usage on your relationships. "When partners come to see me, one issue that comes up over again is that one person wants to talk, but the other person is distracted by the phone. This leads to misunderstanding and resentment," Logsdon reveals. And this isn't just an issue with romantic relationships. "Parents often have a difficult time communicating with their children about this, particularly teenagers who use their phones all the time." Whenever you are going to have a conversation, put the phone down and focus on the topic at hand.

Starting a Conversation about Unhealthy Cell Phone Habits

Is someone you care about exhibiting unhealthy behaviors around cell phone use? A possible first step could be to start a conversation around these behaviors. "Don't be afraid to take this step," Logsdon advises. "I always recommend that my clients 'communicate more, communicate regularly, and communicate often.'" Just showing your care and concern can help them recognize if they have a problem.

Are you concerned about a partner or child who may have unhealthy cell phone habits, but you don't know how to start the conversation? Call EAP for help starting this conversation and getting your loved ones the support they need.