

Prompt: Most teenagers carry cell phones everywhere with them, and even sleep with them at night. Some people argue that smartphones help teenagers build relationships, while others argue that teenagers are so addicted to using their phones that their face-to-face interactions suffer. Are cellphones helpful or harmful to teenagers? Write a multi-paragraph argument essay in which you make a claim, address a possible counterargument, and support your thinking with evidence from both texts.

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## Is Teenagers' Smartphone Obsession Really Bad?

(Text #1)

Adapted from an article by Vishwa Gujarat

- 1 Parents' fears about their teenagers' heavy use of cell phones and social media may be exaggerated as the youngsters' online worlds may be an extension of their offline lives, a new study suggests.
- 2 "We see young people constantly on their phones and assume negative effects, but much of the research to date tells a more positive story," said lead researcher Candice Odgers from Duke University.
- 3 "When we look closely, we see similarities between online and offline communications and activities," Odgers explained.
- 4 Rather than connecting with strangers, most adolescents use digital media to interact with friends and acquaintances in their face-to-face social networks.
- 5 "The overlap between offline and online connections is so striking that viewing what happens online as somehow separate from teenagers' 'real lives' is a false distinction," said co-researcher Madeleine J. George.
- 6 Although cell-phone use may take away time spent with parents, if the existing relationship is strong, the new technology can allow more frequent, positive parent-child contact, researchers suggested.
- 7 However, parents' fears about sleep loss are well founded, the authors noted. Those who use their phones after lights out were twice as likely to report being tired the next day as those who did not.
- 8 "Watching people who get their first smartphone, there's a very quick progression from having a basic phone you don't talk about to people who love their iPhone, name their phone and buy their phones outfits," said Lisa Merlo, director of psychotherapy training at the University of Florida. Merlo, a clinical psychologist, said she's observed a number of behaviors among smartphone users that she labels "problematic." Among them, Merlo says some patients pretend to talk on the phone or fiddle with apps to avoid eye contact or other interactions. Others are so genuinely engrossed in their phones that they ignore the people around them completely.
- 9 "The more bells and whistles the phone has," she says, "the more likely they are to get too attached."
- 10 "As the first generation of digital natives progress through young adulthood, we need to move beyond our fears and design studies that can test whether, how and for whom online worlds are creating new risks, presenting new opportunities, or both," Odgers said.

## How Cell Phones Are Killing Face-to-Face Interactions

(Text #2)

Adapted from an article by Mark Glaser



1 Whether you are dating someone, interviewing someone, or just meeting someone for the first time, there is a special quality about face-to-face interactions. You can catch the subtle tone in their voice, see their expression as it changes from sad to outraged, and you can look them in the eye to see if you trust them.

2 So it's unfortunate that real-life interactions are on the outs as cell phone conversations, texting, instant messaging and Facebook start to take up more of our time. For young people especially, having a cell phone in hand and at the ready is the default mode while walking the streets. That means much less chance of conversation with the people who populate their real lives.

3 Of course, I am not anti-technology and am in awe of the iPhone just like the next gadget freak. But when my friend chooses to tap on his iPhone while we are out having dinner, I feel like I'm having dinner for three: me, him and the iPhone. We often joke about his techno-habit and how hard it is to break, but the joke gets old when it becomes reality.

4 In many cases, having a cell phone around can be a huge help. In emergencies, you can call the police or a friend quickly. If you're running late, you can tell someone where you are. And having music is great when you're out exercising or if you have a long cross-country flight.

5 The problem is that despite all our raging against bad cell phone habits, they continue to happen. People talk on cell phones out at restaurants, and they text while driving.

6 There have even been studies showing that cell phones are causing the same problems as other addictive behavior. According to a University of Florida news story, a Japanese study found that children with cell phones often won't make friends with other children who don't have cell phones. Plus, a British study of college students found that 7% of students had lost a relationship or job due to cell phone usage.

7 That's a warning sign that we as a society are giving in to our electronic addiction, and putting more faith in technology than in our own real-world concerns. I wonder whether more electronic communication will mean less face-to-face conversations, and we'll have generations of people who are more comfortable texting their friends than talking to them in person.

8 What do you think? Are we as a society becoming obsessed with cell phones, texting and social media? Is that a good or bad thing and what's the best way you find to balance tech usage and unplugging?