



BY / BECCA BROADDUS

# THE SMARTPHONE EFFECT

## Y OUR SMARTPHONE BUZZES

ON THE TABLE NEXT TO YOU, AND YOU REACH FOR IT—WANTING TO KNOW WHO TEXTED, OR EMAILED, OR POSTED ON YOUR FACEBOOK WALL, OR SOMEHOW VIRTUALLY REACHED OUT TO YOU. THAT LITTLE RED BUBBLE IN THE CORNER OF THE APP TAUNTS YOU. YOU CAN'T HELP IT—YOU HAVE TO KNOW. **DOES THIS SCENARIO SOUND FAMILIAR?** IF SO, YOU ARE PROBABLY ADDICTED TO YOUR SMARTPHONE, AND YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY, OUR SMARTPHONES ARE DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE. THE INTERMITTENT NATURE OF ALERTS CREATES AN ATTACHMENT AND A RESULTING, PAVLOVIAN-TYPE RESPONSE.

# “HUMANS

## ARE RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN,”

Ben H. Williams Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Nonprofit Leadership & Service Jim Roberts said. “When we can share little victories in our life with other people [on social media], that brings us pleasure.”

When phones provide a positive experience or connection to another person, the phone-checking behavior is reinforced. This addictive behavior affects Americans’ relationships, happiness, upward mobility at work and even life expectancy.

Marketing faculty members Jim Roberts, author of the smartphone addiction book “Too Much of a Good Thing: Are You Addicted to Your Smartphone?” and Meredith David have focused their recent research on the effects of smartphone snubbing, called “phubbing,” on relationships.

In the presence of loved ones, many Americans of all ages find themselves checked out of conversations and mindlessly scrolling. It has become so ubiquitous that in 2016, Chick-fil-A restaurants created a “family challenge,” which dares customers to silence and put away their phones for a distraction-free meal.

“We need to try to be cognizant of the time we’re spending on our phones while we’re with others,” David, assistant professor of Marketing, said. “Because most of the time, we don’t even realize



consciously that we’re on our phone ignoring this person, but that person realizes it. It hurts their feelings.”

Roberts adds, “We assume millennials are the worst [about phubbing] because they’re digital natives, but our feelings are still hurt whether we’re a millennial or an older adult when we are phubbed.”

Their research suggests those whose romantic partners exhibit more phubbing

Beyond adverse relational effects, on a more somber note, the United States Department of Transportation reported cell phones are involved in 1.6 million auto crashes each year that cause a half million injuries and take approximately 6,000 lives.

Tristan Harris, former product philosopher at Google, has had enough of smartphone addiction. In an effort to hold developers responsible for intentionally creating addictive operating systems and apps, he founded Time Well Spent, an advocacy group promoting the creation of a sort of “Hippocratic Oath” for software designers to prevent them from creating apps and programs meant to encourage addiction.

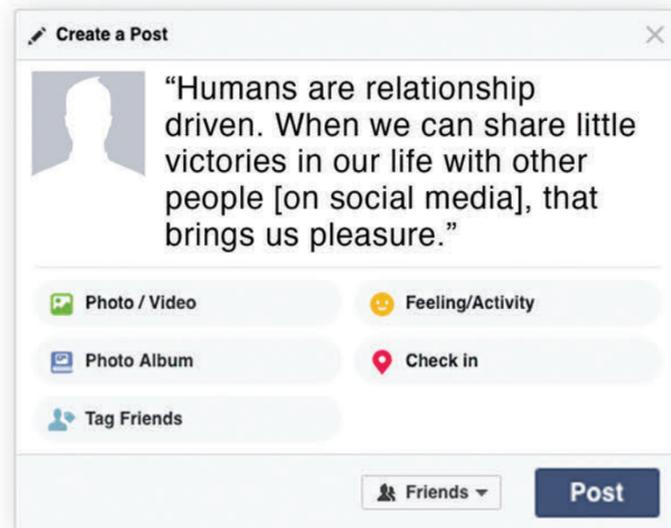
In a recent *The Atlantic* article, Harris insisted, “There needs to be new ratings, new criteria, new design standards, new certification standards... There is a way to design based not on addiction.”

Smartphone addiction is affecting Americans’ lives, but the remedy is still being decided. Harris is targeting technology designers and developers, while local and state governments adopt laws against smartphone-related distracted driving. According to distraction.gov statistics, 46 states currently ban texting for all drivers. In New Jersey, a measure allowing the fining of distracted walking has been proposed.



“Smartphones are not bad,” Roberts said. “We love smartphones, but we love them too much. We’ve crossed our tipping points. We don’t pay attention to our romantic partners. We don’t pay attention when we’re driving. The good things about smartphones have morphed into bad things about smartphones.”

[bbr.baylor.edu/smartphone-effect](http://bbr.baylor.edu/smartphone-effect) <



behaviors are more likely to experience conflict in the relationship and have lower levels of satisfaction. More recently, the duo’s research indicates the negative effects of phubbing extend beyond the dinner table.

“If you are using your smartphone during meetings at work or your boss is using a smartphone in a meeting, it can lower your motivation at work,” Roberts said. “You feel diminished by that.”



**1** WHEN I AM HAVING A MEAL WITH OTHERS (AT HOME OR IN A RESTAURANT), I WILL PULL OUT AND CHECK MY CELL PHONE.

YES  NO

**2** I ALWAYS HAVE MY CELL PHONE IN SIGHT WHEN I AM SPENDING TIME WITH OTHERS.

YES  NO

**3** I OFTEN KEEP MY CELL PHONE IN MY HAND WHEN I AM WITH OTHERS.

YES  NO

**4** IF MY CELL PHONE RINGS OR BEEPS, I WILL PULL IT OUT AND CHECK, EVEN IF I AM TALKING WITH SOMEONE.

YES  NO

**5** I HAVE BEEN CAUGHT GLANCING AT MY CELL PHONE WHEN TALKING TO SOMEONE.

YES  NO

**6** WHEN I AM HANGING WITH FRIENDS, I DON’T HESITATE TO CHECK MY CELL PHONE IF I AM BORED, GET A TEXT OR SOME OTHER NOTIFICATION.

YES  NO

**7** I WILL USE MY CELL PHONE WHEN I AM TALKING WITH FRIENDS.

YES  NO

**8** I USE MY CELL PHONE WHEN I AM ON A DATE OR WITH MY ROMANTIC PARTNER.

YES  NO

**9** IF THERE IS A LULL IN A CONVERSATION, I WILL PLAY ON MY CELL PHONE.

YES  NO

# ARE YOU A PHUBBER TAKE THE QUIZ.



## THE RESULTS ARE IN...

TO CALCULATE YOUR SCORE, SIMPLY ADD UP THE NUMBER OF “YES” RESPONSES TO EACH OF THE NINE STATEMENTS AND CHECK HOW YOU DID BELOW.



**6+ “YES” RESPONSES**

Yikes! You should consider some phubbing rehabilitation.



**3-5 “YES” RESPONSES**

Be careful. You are on the edge of the slippery slope to phubbing.



**1-2 “YES” RESPONSES**

You are a master of cell-control or you don’t have any friends (just kidding).