

1. **Mark your confusion.**
2. **Show evidence of a close reading.**
3. **Write a 1+ page reflection.**

Half of Teens Think They're Addicted to Their Smartphones

Source: Kelly Wallace, CNN, May 3, 2016

I don't have teenagers yet, but watching my 8- and 10-year-olds spend endless amounts of time on iPads during spring break makes me worried about the day -- hopefully years from now -- when they have their own devices.

A new poll that confirms just how much teens depend on their phones gives me even more to worry about. Fifty percent of teens feel they are addicted to their mobile devices, according to the poll, which was conducted for Common Sense Media, a nonprofit focused on helping children, parents, teachers and policymakers negotiate media and technology. A larger number of parents, 59%, said their teens were addicted. The poll involved 1,240 interviews with parents and their children, ages 12 to 18.

"Technological addiction can happen to anyone," said digital detox expert Holland Haiis, who describes technology as "the new 21st century addiction" in her book "Consciously Connecting: A Simple Process to Reconnect in a Disconnected World."

"If your teens would prefer gaming indoors, alone, as opposed to going out to the movies, meeting friends for burgers or any of the other ways that teens build camaraderie, you may have a problem."

How many teens are truly addicted to their devices and the Internet? It is difficult to say. A 2011 review of 18 research studies found that Internet addiction might affect between zero and 26% of adolescents and college students in the United States, according to Common Sense Media. And, while Internet addiction is viewed as a public health threat in other parts of the world, it is not yet a recognized disorder in the United States. After reviewing all the existing research, Common Sense Media concludes that more study is needed to determine how real digital addiction is, and what the signs and consequences could be.

Whether it is an addiction or not, two-thirds of parents -- 66% -- feel their teens spend too much time on their mobile devices, and 52% of teens agree, according to the poll.

'Teenage zombies' consumed by phones

Nearly 80% of teens in the new survey said they checked their phones hourly, and 72% said they felt the need to immediately respond to texts and social networking messages. Thirty-six percent of parents said they argued with their child daily about device use, and 77% of parents feel their children get distracted by their devices and don't pay attention when they are together at least a few times per week.

Terry Greenwald, a father of three grown children, works as a custodian at a high school in Homer, Alaska, and said the hallways are often half-filled with "teenage zombies who are glued to their phones."

They often walk near the walls so they can move from class to class without looking away from their screens, he said. "It gets interesting when they get to the stairways and the walls end for the stairway," he said. "They don't want to look up and they don't want to tumble down the stairs but often just slow way down and inch along until they reach the wall just past the opening. They are often late to the next class, but that's OK because they were successful at not diverting attention from their phone."

Janis Elspas, founder of Mommy Blog Expert, believes the rules and boundaries parents set for their children when they get their first cell phone or smartphone might be helpful in heading off any addictions later on.

Her children, 18-year-old triplets and a 20-year-old, didn't own their first cell phones until they were at least a junior in high school and had a part-time job to pay for part or all of the monthly phone service. She also has a no-phone policy at the dinner table, which extends to her and her husband.

"This rule also applies to the kids' friends who might be sitting at the table with us," said Elspas of Los Angeles. "Sometimes they are shocked when I reprimand them for bringing their phone out and if there's a notification or it rings, I ask them to turn off their device."

Such a rule can prove to kids, firsthand, that they can "survive" without having to see or use their smartphone constantly, she added.

There are signs that some teens may be getting that message and realize too much time on their devices isn't necessarily a good thing. More than one-third of teens, 37%, said they very often or occasionally try to cut down the amount of time they spend on their devices, the Common Sense Media poll found.

Parents have a problem, too

Parents might complain about the amount of time their teens spend on their phones, but they admit they have their own difficulties when it comes to unplugging.

Twenty-seven percent of parents feel they are addicted to their mobile devices, while nearly the same number of teens, 28%, believe their parents are addicted, according to the poll.

Sixty-nine percent of parents check their devices at least hourly compared to the 78% of teens who say they do that, and nearly half, 48%, of parents feel they need to immediately respond to texts and social networking messages. More than half, 56%, of parents admit checking their mobile devices while driving and nearly the same number, 52%, very often or occasionally try to cut down the amount of time they spend on devices.

GG Benitez, a mother of three, said that as the founder and chief executive officer of her own public relations firm, she feels the pressure to always be available due to the fear of losing any potential press opportunities for her clients.

While she is often praised by her clients and her family and friends for her "immediate response" to texts, emails and social media posts, she said this constant need to be connected can be taxing. Yet, even when she tries to stay off her phone in the evenings for at least one hour, she has a tough time.

"I had taken my son to a movie, and he turned around to me and said, 'Are you serious, Mom? We are at the movies and you are still on your phone?'" said Benitez, who has a 10-year-old son and two daughters, ages 11 and 22.

Haiis, the digital detox expert, said one way to try to curb an addiction to digital devices is to resist endless hours of surfing the Internet. "We have constant access to new information and this is alluring, intriguing and exciting, but without setting limits for yourself, it's a slippery slope," she said.

She also said to limit posting on social media to three to five times a week, if possible, which will make you more specific about what you post and will lead to less time spent looking at other people's posts.

And, when you are at home and feel the urge to reach for your device, go outside, take a walk or exercise, she said. "The dopamine in our brains is stimulated by the unpredictability that social media, emails and texting provide," said Haiis. "It's a vicious cycle and in order to break that cycle, you need to find the same unpredictability and stimulation which is out there if you are exercising. You never know what's around the bend when out for a jog, bike ride or walk."

Benitez, the public relations executive who finds it hard to stay off her phone, said she has taken steps to curb her own digital addiction, such as setting aside the phone during mealtime.

"I have consciously made the decision to be more 'present' and will place the phone on silent and away from my vision, but not without the anxiety that I may be missing something important," she added.

Possible Response Questions:

- Do you have a cell phone addiction? Explain.
- Choose a passage and respond.