



## COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Are You A Slave To Your Smartphone?

*“I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.” ~ Albert Einstein*

Technological advances over the past 50 years have drastically altered the way we live our lives. Both our personal and professional lives are impacted by technology that continues to change and improve at an exponential rate. Change, however, usually has both positive and negative aspects. How many hours per day do you spend *without* a smartphone, tablet, or a computer? For most people in the legal profession, our phones and tablets are basically an appendage; they never leave us. As a consequence, research suggests that our attention spans have shortened and our personal and professional relationships suffer as a result of our dependency on our technology.

The problem is that depression, negative thoughts, loneliness, physical pain, compulsion, vision problems, and a decreased ability to communicate effectively during face-to-face interpersonal discussions results from such a strong dependency on our smart phones and computers. It would have been ridiculous to consider, even 10 or 15 years ago, that the following would be possible: a smartphone addiction as a legitimate addiction; that people would develop a fear to being without a cell phone (nomophobia); that it would become impossible for many people to relax because they are on alert for incoming texts or emails; that people would feel a compulsion to send pictures of everything they are doing or eating to everyone they know throughout the day; or that a decline in patience would result from phone use, and that the concept of delayed gratification would become a metaphoric dinosaur.

Examine your dependence on technology and try the following suggestions:

1. When possible, pick up the phone and have a conversation with the person you were about to email or text.
2. When possible, schedule a face-to-face meeting. Research shows that: we communicate better with each other when we are face-to-face; in-person meetings are more productive than attempting to work on projects using email correspondence; and conflicts have a better chance of being resolved with speaking on the phone or in-person rather than trying to solve issues via text or email.
3. If you are in a meeting or having a meal with someone, avoid looking at your phone and instead focus on the present moment.

4. Dedicate at least 30 minutes each morning, and 30 minutes before going to bed, to putting down and shutting down your smart phone, computer, and TV. Slowly increase that amount of time to one hour.
5. DO NOT use your phone as your alarm clock if you will wake up looking at texts, the news, and emails.
6. Select times throughout the day when you will look at your email or texts rather than mindlessly checking your phone every 10 minutes.
7. Try paying attention and being present for the events in your life rather than just taking pictures of them, tweeting them, texting them, or Facebooking them.

Living life is about experiencing life, not being immersed in a superficial or artificial sense of connection that ultimately can leave us feeling hollow, disconnected, and alone. It's difficult to buck such a strong current that our society is on, but you will find yourself happier and healthier by "powering up by powering down." Start today ~ there is no time like the present!

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