

Put down the phone and live in the moment, says psychiatrist

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Credit: Vojko Kalan/public domain

Have you ever unintentionally left your phone at home and wondered how you would get through the day? Baylor College of Medicine's Dr. Jin Han explains why this might be a sign that you need to put down your phone more often.

"There has been an evolution in technology as our phones have gone from just regular cell phones to [smart phones](#) that allow you to multitask all with one [device](#)," said Han, assistant professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor. "You use your phone now to receive emails, to text and chat and to access [social media platforms](#) – essentially your phone may be your connection to your [social life](#)."

Although they offer many advantages, Han cautions that using your smart devices can be harmful if you use them excessively. For example, using your smart phone while driving, or even walking, can cause serious accidents. Also, staring at your screen for too long can be harmful to your vision.

Spending too much time on your phone also can impact the quality of your relationships, he said. If you are on your phone constantly and not engaged with those around you, it can take away from your relationships with your family and friends. In addition, if you are using your phone excessively in front your children, then they will likely follow your lead and use their own smart devices rather than interacting with you.

"In the end, the question is how do you balance using your phone while not negatively impacting your health?" Han said. "Anything that you are doing to the extreme is not healthy anymore. While it is going to be almost impossible not to use this technology, we have to create a behavior that is healthy."

To help balance the time you spend on your phone, Han offered the following tips:

- **Prioritize:** Ask yourself what you need your phone for at that moment. If you don't need to be on your phone, then don't use it.
- **Limit the time spent on your phone:** Set up certain times that you

allow yourself to be on the phone.

- Do not use your phone at night: Being on your phone late into the night can make it harder for you to fall asleep and wake up the next day. Restricting your phone use at night can help you implement a healthy sleep hygiene behavior.

"You have to reflect on the health benefits of having this kind of lifestyle. We do this all the time when we have other lifestyle issues like with exercising, for example," Han said. "If you do not set some exercise guidelines for yourself, then it can lead to a sedentary life. Smart device use is the same problem. If you are on your [phone](#) excessively, it is not healthy."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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