# New book reveals simple steps to break smartphone addiction and regain focus



In an age dominated by smartphones, many struggle with managing their screen time, often succumbing to the addictive nature of their devices. A new book by Dr Kaitlyn Regehr, an academic specialising in digital humanities, proposes strategies to reclaim control over our screen habits, a sentiment echoed by recent studies and expert recommendations.

Regehr’s book, *Smartphone Nation*, outlines an approach to understanding our smartphone use, commencing with a "phone fed journal". This method, as the author suggests, involves tracking one's intended phone activities against the reality of what actually occurs. Such self-awareness can shine a light on patterns of behaviour that often go unnoticed, particularly the all-too-common scenario of opening an app only to find oneself lost in an unrelated activity. This resonates with observations in research conducted by Dr Maxi Heitmayer at the London School of Economics, who found that people frequently check their phones for seemingly trivial reasons, which can disrupt focus and flow during tasks.

The prevalence of this kind of distraction stems from the design of smartphone interfaces, which intentionally directs user attention to multiple applications. "This technology wants to seamlessly move you off one task and on to another application, then hold you there for as long as possible," warns Regehr, highlighting a fundamental challenge that many face.

Two main types of problematic smartphone use have emerged for many users: "deliberate procrastination" and the "oblivion vortex". The former relates to avoiding difficult tasks by seeking distractions, while the latter occurs when users lose track of time, their attention diverted by algorithm-driven content. A simple rearrangement of daily tasks, as the author notes, can mitigate procrastination tendencies—such as scheduling more mentally challenging work for times when energy levels are higher.

In a bid to refine her personal experience with distraction, the author attempted several of Regehr’s strategies, including switching her phone to greyscale. This method, also endorsed by Dr Alex Taylor from Newcastle Business School, reduces visual stimulation thereby making engaging with apps less enticing. Taylor remarks that minimising exposure to colourful graphics can be an effective deterrent against checking smartphones unnecessarily.

While bringing attention to the issue of digital distractions, Regehr also underscores the merits of mindless scrolling when it serves as a necessary break. "Sometimes we need a break," she affirms, while advocating for more intentional engagement with online content. This is particularly pertinent given the emotional impact that social media feeds can evoke, often leaving users feeling inadequate or subjected to targeted advertising that reflects their personal data.

To support healthier smartphone use, various sources elucidate practical strategies. From the University of Arizona's guidance on activating 'Do Not Disturb' settings to the National Institutes of Health's recommendations on establishing screen-free zones, there's consensus on the necessity of intentional digital engagement. These approaches encourage integrating digital habits into daily routines while prioritising mental health and connection to the physical world.

Comprehensive proposals include setting strict app limits, organising devices away from immediate reach, and utilising features like screen time monitoring. Notably, the Grant Halliburton Foundation advocates for limiting device usage during meals and fostering real-world connections to counterbalance the allure of online interaction.

In this journey of digital detoxification, the author finds herself more conscious of smartphone interactions. Although stints of aimless browsing occasionally persist, the transition towards selecting enjoyable and enriching apps signifies a positive shift. As Dr Regehr suggests, like a dietary pyramid, users can categorise their digital activities, enjoying indulgent diversions without it becoming a slippery slope to mindless consumption.

Ultimately, adopting a balanced digital diet can require persistence and effort. However, with ongoing reflection and adjustment, many can cultivate a healthier relationship with their smartphones—one where the occasional indulgence, such as viewing a light-hearted video, is a choice rather than a default.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article on smartphone habits and strategies.
2. Arizona guide on digital detox strategies.
3. NIH tips for managing screen time.
4. Healthy Screens strategies for reducing screen time.
5. Grant Halliburton's practical tips from the 'ScreenWise' program.
6. UPMC suggestions for breaking screen time addiction.
7. WebMD advice on managing smartphone use.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/17/could-a-digital-diet-help-me-fix-my-bad-phone-habits> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://health.arizona.edu/digital-detox> - The University of Arizona's Campus Health offers a comprehensive guide on digital detox strategies to help individuals manage smartphone addiction. Key recommendations include activating 'Do Not Disturb' mode to reduce distractions, setting app limits to promote time management, and switching the phone display to grayscale to decrease visual appeal. The guide emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and gradual implementation of these strategies to achieve a healthier balance between digital and offline activities.
3. <https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/7-tips-for-managing-screen-use> - The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides seven expert tips for managing screen time and cultivating healthy digital habits. Suggestions include modeling healthy habits for children, creating screen-free zones in the home, balancing screen time with other activities, being mindful of screen use at bedtime, and utilizing technology wisely through parental controls and activity reports. The article emphasizes the importance of intentional and mindful technology use to promote overall well-being.
4. <https://www.healthyscreens.com/strategies> - Healthy Screens outlines ten strategies to reduce screen time and mitigate smartphone addiction. These strategies include reducing notifications, enabling screen time tracking, keeping the phone away while sleeping, setting the phone screen to grayscale, hiding social media apps, and making the phone less accessible. The article highlights the effectiveness of these 'nudges' in promoting healthier digital habits and improving sleep quality.
5. <https://www.granthalliburton.org/screenwise> - The Grant Halliburton Foundation's 'ScreenWise' program offers practical tips for reducing screen time and protecting mental health. Recommendations include setting boundaries such as creating tech-free zones and times, prioritizing real-life connections by scheduling offline activities, managing notifications and distractions by turning off non-essential alerts, making sleep a priority by avoiding screens before bed, and being mindful of screen habits by tracking usage and taking regular breaks. The program emphasizes the importance of intentional and balanced technology use.
6. <https://share.upmc.com/2022/06/unplugged-breaking-your-screen-addiction/> - UPMC HealthBeat provides a guide to breaking screen time addiction, focusing on strategies such as setting productivity timers and screen time limits, establishing no-screen periods before 8 a.m. and after 8 p.m., and promoting family time by limiting device usage during meals and gatherings. The article also suggests using the 'Do Not Disturb' feature to manage notifications and recommends keeping phones in another room while sleeping to reduce morning and nighttime scrolling.
7. <https://www.webmd.com/balance/features/addicted-your-smartphone-what-to-do> - WebMD offers expert advice on managing smartphone use, including being conscious of situations and emotions that prompt checking the phone, turning off alert signals to avoid temptation, and being disciplined about not using the device in certain situations or hours. The article also highlights the benefits of taking regular 'predictable time off' from devices to improve efficiency, collaboration, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.