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Teens & Cell Phones - Use, not Abuse

By Alex Lee

Facebook. Twitter. Instagram. Tumblr. iMessage. All of them on your phone. What's the similarity between them? If you answered that they're all social networking sites or applications, you are only partially correct. The connection is that most of us are addicted to them.

Let's admit it. Every time we feel that vibration in our pockets or hear our unique jingle ring on our phones, we must check right away. We enjoy the convenience of having phones with Internet data for faster access. And what's the quickest way to check our social networking sites? OUR PHONES.

Here's a question that every teen needs to answer. "Do I use or abuse my cell phone privileges?"

Andrew Chow, a sophomore in Lafayette said, "I think most teenagers are abusing the main purpose of using mobile phones which is using the device as a phone. Teens text or use Facebook and log into social networks too often, getting distracted from school work and other more important priorities."

Christian Linfoot, a junior, also from Lafayette, said that teenagers these days "use their cell phones constantly because they communicate quickly and easily with each other and are able to stay in touch like never before."

Teenagers are sucked into the harmful whirlwind of social networking on their phones. We don't even realize that we're abusing our cell phone privileges and exposing ourselves to danger. Texting while driving has become the number one reason for adolescent accidents. When we're using social networking on our phones, how much time are we spending actually talking face to face with our friends?

Many of my friends have an iPhone or some other brand of smartphone. Smartphones are the phones of dreams.

They provide us with games, messaging, email, social networking, apps, cameras, address books, and more. They are not just phones but also personal assistants and entertainment systems. However, phones were originally created to help us communicate with other human beings when we couldn't see them in person. It's important to remember that, instead of talking to friends on social networking sites, we need to still speak with them in person.

In my opinion, teenagers spend too much time social networking via their phones. Social networking has become an abhorrent source of bullying. According to studies done by many major universities, more than 56 percent of teens have said that they have once been the target of a cyber-bullying activity. Using a cell phone to degrade someone on Facebook or Twitter has the possibility of destroying the reputation and life of another person. If we don't have the courage to confront someone in person, we should not do it online either. People feel protected by their screens, incorrectly believing that whatever they say are "just words" on a display. Nasty or demeaning verbiage or photos is never acceptable and could have a devastating and life-threatening effect on the person being bullied.

School is in session, and every teen has the responsibility of understanding that our purpose is to study and learn.

Although our friends are just down the hallway, they are also at the touch of our fingertips on our phones. Before we push "send," we need to think. Which is more important to our futures - social networking or schoolwork? Checking our cell phones constantly while at school is abusing our educational options.

My advice is to use our phones responsibly. Turn it off when we are in the classroom. If a message is that critical, we'll receive it soon enough. Most everything can wait. Be a user, not an abuser.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

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