



Technology Addiction

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Call me old-fashioned if you wish but I am really sick and tired of the way that people have become addicted to their cellphones. When I grew up the only time we might hear from a family member who lived out of town was on Sunday when the long-distance rates were reduced for the three-minute conversation. And if we missed the call, we didn't even know it because there wasn't such a thing as voice mail.

I never answer the phone at the office and most of the time don't know where I have left my cellphone. Only a handful of people even have the number for it. If they want to talk with me, they can leave a message on my home voice mail and I will get it at the end of my workday. You see, I really don't think there is anything happening that is so earth-shattering that it can't wait for a few hours.

When I'm with clients I want them to know that they have my total attention. When I am writing reports, I find that I can do a much more efficient and accurate job in an environment that is quiet. And when I am with friends and family, I want to totally enjoy my time with them.

My daughter and her husband have decided that they will no longer go out for dinner with a couple who used to be good friends. They made this decision because the couple was texting during most of the meal rather than visiting and enjoying their time together. Last week I was in a restaurant and was sad to see four individuals who were all so focused on their cellphones that they didn't even talk to each other! What was the point in going out together? They might as well have stayed home alone and ordered in.

It shocks me when I am in the grocery store and notice an individual who cannot choose a loaf of bread without calling someone to ask which one they should purchase. Just pick one! Make a decision.

Even though one of the first announcements at a concert or meeting is a reminder to turn cellphones off, there is always someone who disregards this and causes a disruption partway through the event. Even on airplanes, the flight attendant usually has to make extra attempts to get passengers to follow simple directions. Turn devices off!

Many organizations are now telling employees that they cannot use any form of social media during work hours because of the drop in productivity that it has caused. Some have even had to set up nanny-type programs to block access because the workers have disregarded the policies regarding this.

The other day I was talking about this and my son explained that cellphones, texting, and social media are the ways that people communicate now and I just need to accept it! Well, I definitely think that there are strong advantages to having modern technology but am not convinced that the way it is used by individuals is appropriate.

When technology prevents people who are together from having a good conversation with each other, I think they lose out. When they can't take a walk without having a cellphone glued to their ears, they miss all that nature offers. When they can't make a decision without contacting someone else, they limit their creativity and problem-solving abilities. When they

allow someone who just happened to call or text them at work, they are losing their focus, lowering their productivity, and ultimately stealing from their employer.

Yes, I probably am a little old-fashioned when it comes to technology. But I know that when I am with others, I will have a stimulating conversation. I have developed the ability to shop without consulting others and when I work, I am able to focus without unnecessary interruptions.

Just try turning your cellphone off for one day. I think you will find that you will be more peaceful and productive. You see, it's not the technology that is the problem - it's the way that you let it run your life!