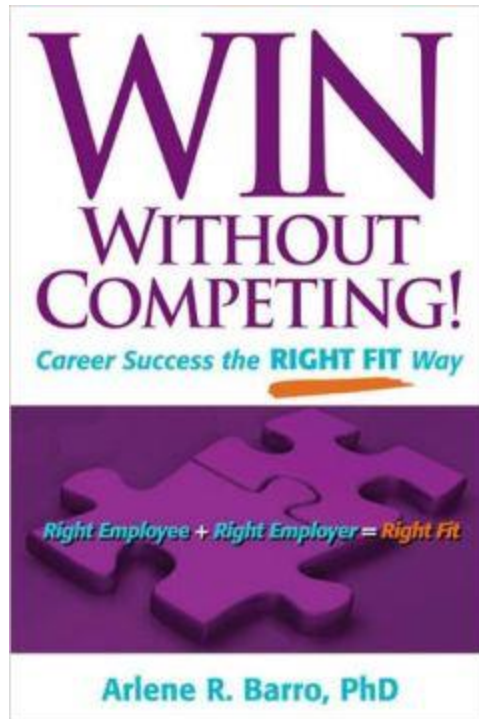


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Smartphones Cause Stress



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By Dr. Arlene Barro

Is it possible that using a smart phone, cell phone and mini-computer combo, can become a lethal addiction? Absolutely! Teenagers, the primary users, are the addicts.

Smartphones Disturb Brain Functioning

Extensive daily usage of smartphones can cause chemical imbalances in the brain. Severe anxiety, depression, tiredness and stress are the results of these imbalances.

Dr. Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, conducted research on the impact of smartphones on teenagers, which she reported in *The Washington Post*. She examined the suicide rates of teenagers between 2010-2015. After looking at smartphone usage and large national surveys which evaluated teenage depression, and suicide rates, Twenge concluded that suicide rates increase as usage of smartphones rises. During the five-year period she studied, suicide rates rose by more than 30 percent for 13 to 18 year olds. In her article, Twenge strongly and convincingly supported her argument that smartphones are the cause of teenage suicide.

What should teenagers do to reduce the risk of committing suicide? Limit the time they spend on smartphones. Ideally, not more than one hour a day. Each hour above that increases their risk. At five or more hours, they are 71 percent more likely to have one strong risk factor for suicide, regardless of content. The heavy usage goes hand in hand with depression and hopelessness, contributing to suicide risk. Moreover, isolation accompanies smartphone addiction which is another risk factor. Interacting with people, outside of social media, is critical to survival.

Blue Light Causes Insomnia

Electronic devices, including smartphones, cell phones, and televisions emit an artificial blue light. Why is this harmful to sleep? Blue light suppresses the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin from rising at night in our bodies which leads to insomnia. Curtis Brainard, in the *Scientific American*, reports that teenagers are highly sensitive to blue light. The Mayo Clinic says that smartphones cause both insomnia and neck pain. Dr. James Wilson, an expert on adrenals “the glands of stress,” recommends limiting all electronic devices at night. He suggests 8 p.m. as a cut off time to allow the melatonin to rise. For healthy adrenals, Wilson recommends going to bed before 10:30 p.m. and staying in bed until 9 a.m., as often as possible. Following his advice can significantly reduce stress and keep our bodies in balance.

Circadian Rhythm Disrupted: Consequences

Each one of us has a “body clock” which is the popular name for circadian rhythm, our biological clock. In 2017 researchers who studied chronobiology were awarded a Nobel Prize.

Our body clock tells us when to go to sleep, rise, eat and regulates many physiological processes. Melatonin not only affects sleep but other types of functioning such as memory. In fact, to identify our internal circadian rhythm, we measure the amount of melatonin in our blood or saliva.

If the circadian rhythm is disrupted, the risk increases for cardiovascular events and obesity. There is a correlation between circadian rhythm and neurological problems such as depression and bipolar disorders. The impact of the changing circadian rhythm in teenage smartphone addicts needs to be evaluated in-depth.

The research on smartphones indicates the significant negative impact on the health of teenagers, including rising rates of suicide. Where are the warning labels on smartphones?

Questions about this column or ongoing Conquering Stress Seminars? Email drbarro@barroglobal.com

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