

# App may help reduce phone usage

It might be a bit like hosting an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at a bar but cellphone apps designed to track and reduce time spent on the phone are becoming hugely popular.



Constantly answering or checking cellphones makes people more stressed and less productive according to research in the UK, US and South Africa. Image: <http://yourddofme> Your Daily Dose of Me]]

One such app, Checky, was reported by the New York Times this week to have been downloaded almost 250,000 times.

Another, Moment, has given cellphone users 20 to 70 extra minutes a day by pinging them to remind them of how many times they have used their phone.

The app was designed by US programmer Kevin Holesh after he realised he wasn't spending enough quality time with his wife.

This might come as positive news for parents sick of zombie-generation kids who stare at their cellphones all day. And it could be useful for kids who get no help with homework because mom or dad is addicted to online Scrabble.

But the issues run deeper: recent studies have found direct links between excessive phone use and poor mental health.

A study at Kent State University, in the US, found that cellphone use - texting, in particular - detracted from academic performance and increased anxiety.

## Devices interrupt the working day

Researchers found that a device is typically bought to help an individual manage his workload but once the individual starts to use his smartphone the work-load management benefits are displaced by the pressure to keep abreast with a newly expanded virtual social life.

The findings echo research by British psychologist Richard Balding, of the University of Worcester, who found a direct correlation between stress and the number of times a phone is checked for messages.

The study found that the most stressed people experienced phantom alert vibrations when no alerts had been signalled.

Mandy Russell, a Cape Town business and personal performance coach, said many of her clients battle with stress because time thieves prevent them from getting down to work. Phones, it seems are among the main culprits.

"People get stressed because they are not getting down to work and this is because of things such as social media, and because anyone can reach you at any time because of your cellphone. These things get in the way of work."

She said such behaviour eats into the time spent working and causes stress because people are not able to differentiate between what's urgent and what's unimportant.

"Because cellphones interrupt us, we perceive something as needing an immediate response when, in fact, it often doesn't," she said.



Personal coach and adviser Mandy Russell says cellphone users must learn to discern what's important and what's unimportant when it comes to checking messages or answering phones. Image: LinkedIn

Source: The Times via I-Net Bridge

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