

# Nomophobia: A growing problem with no solution in sight

 By [Sid Peimer](#)

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Some 58% of men and 47% of women suffer from this disease.[1] I personally think it's getting worse with very little relief in sight with more and more people contracting the illness. Technology has not come to the rescue; on the contrary, technology has made it worse.

Nomophobia is the abbreviation for "no-mobile-phone-phobia". It's not a great choice of word - described as somewhat of a 'faux-Greek' by one Michael Quinton who informs us that 'nomos' means law in Greek. But fear is fear (however, you can't bribe your phone no matter how smart it is).

## The stress test

In research commissioned by the UK Post Office (why?), the organisation YouGov found that mobile phone users tended to cite the main reason for the anxiety was that they would be out of touch with friends and family. The study looked at stress levels, finding that an average case of nomophobia induced stress equivalent to wedding day jitters and even a trip to the dentist. Some 10% of respondents did however say that they needed to be contactable at all times because of work.[1] "What's that music in the background?" was a question that I developed convincing answers to during working hours.

Frontrange asked people what would happen if they went without their smartphone for a week. 66% said they would not last one day, while 44% said they would give up their phones for a week if they were paid more than US\$100, and 19% said they would need more than US\$500.[2]

I presume the remaining lot could be described as committed clingons - you'd have to scrape them off their smartphones.

## An iPad a day does not the doctor keep away

The situation gets medically worse. Recent studies from Asia into internet addiction have provided evidence of a genetic link between serotonergic and dopaminergic neurotransmission (in other words, chemicals in the brain) and internet addiction. Although causality is not evidence (for example, people are not less hard working because you can't reach them on Wednesday and Friday afternoons), but they did find one gene that was implicated in the issue of internet addiction: the CHRNA4 (nicotinic acetylcholine receptor subunit alpha 4). So if you get caught on Facebook at work, you are perfectly in your rights to blame your genes - and hence your parents.[3]

## Mobile is a layer

Chances are, if you reached out with your arm right now, you could get your smartphone (if you're not reading this on your phone already). Mobile telephony is different - rather than a medium, it has become a layer over our lives. We use it while watching TV, driving (we text in a moving car with lethal consequences - such as a spelling error) and even operating heavy machinery. You could say it's something like the radio, but when you need to phone to chirp in on the radio, it's a lot more difficult than a retweet.

## No cure - yet

Although there is no ICD-10 code\* yet for this specific affliction, researchers into the phenomenon offer some pointers: [4]

- If you're on prepaid, keep your credit topped up.
- Carry a charger (car, laptop, and wall plug) at all times.
- Give family and friends an alternative contact number.
- Carry a pre-paid phone card to make emergency calls if your cellphone gets lost or stolen.
- Keep a record of your numbers in case you lose your handset.
- Carry the phone in a closed pocket or bag to avoid loss or theft.
- Get a second phone and have adequate tranquilisers to get you through the four hours needed to activate your SIM swap (that's my tuppence).

Or you can always go cold turkey: just switch off the phone.

To find out more about consumer afflictions and strategy in general, view Sid Peimer's training courses on [www.stratplanning.com](http://www.stratplanning.com). No train, no brain.

*\*An ICD-10 code is the required classification for any medical condition that is being treated. It allows the government to collect stats and medical aids to be difficult. You'll see it on the invoice from your psychiatrist.*

1. Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomophobia>
2. Kristin Piombino. Your guide to surviving without your smartphone. Entrepreneur January 12, 2014. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/230764>
3. Montag C, Kirsch P, Sauer C, Markett S, Reuter M. The role of the CHRNA4 gene in Internet addiction: a case-control study. J Addict Med. 2012 Sep;6(3):191-5. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22722381>
4. Nomophobia is the fear of being out of mobile phone contact - and it's the plague of our 24/7 age. Mail online <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-550610/Nomophobia-fear-mobile-phone-contact--plague-24-7-age.html>

## ABOUT SID PEIMER

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