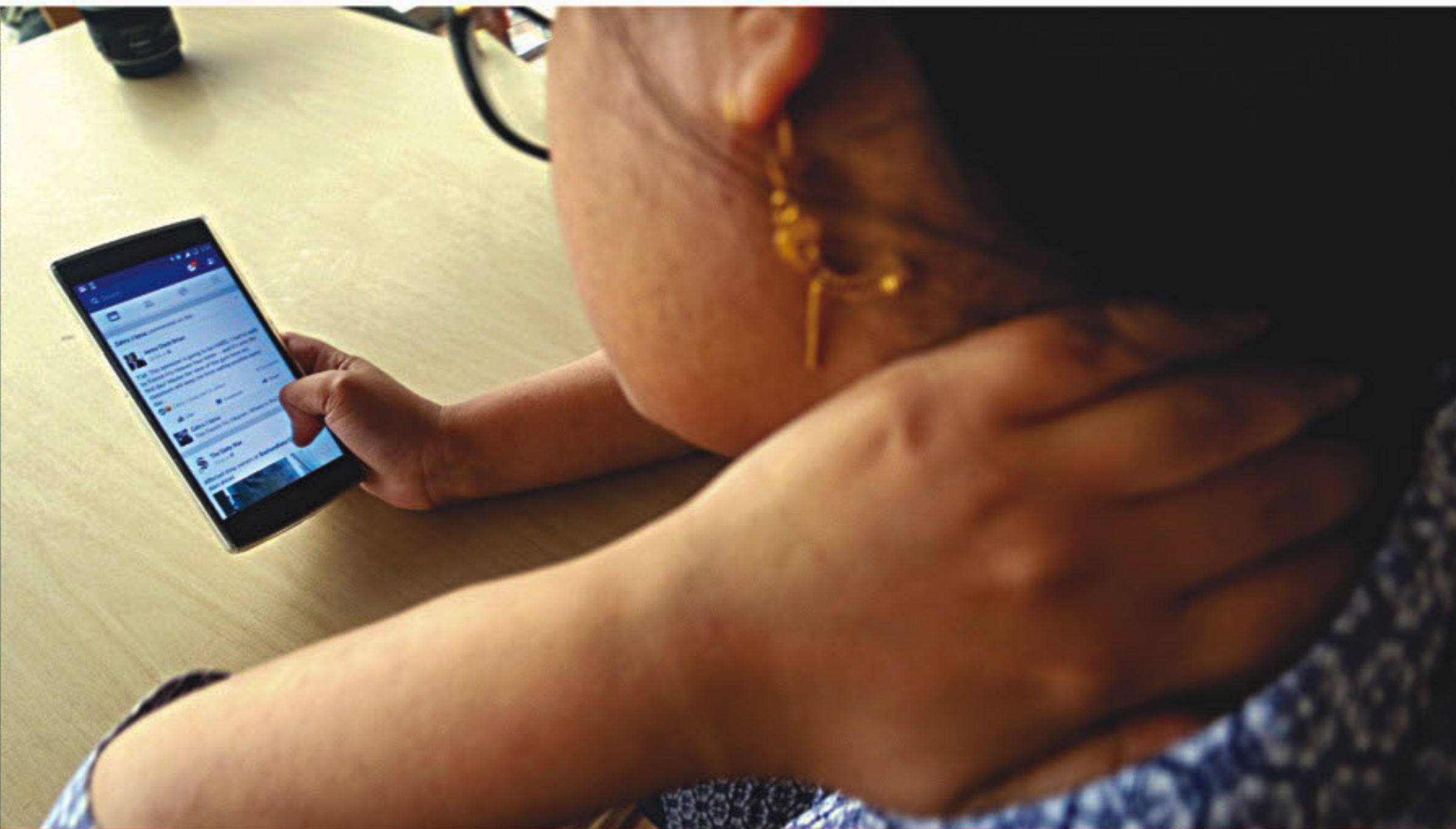


**SPOTLIGHT**



# DIARY OF A SMART PHONE ADDICT

I was never much of a tech-savvy person. Even when I was younger, I never fell into the hype of the newest trendy phones. Since I got my first phone, I was happy as long as I could make and receive calls and texts. Due to 'changing times' and 'people's needs' I got myself a Smartphone. These uber-delicate, hangs-every-five-minutes-after-6-months-use phones were and still are all that is good and trendy. I didn't get it. I, frankly, am uncomfortable having 'the whole world in my palm' or whatever they say to romanticise it.

I have broken my Smartphone many times. The regret afterwards was worryingly low. I needed to teach myself a lesson, to find some worth in these phones. So the last time I managed to break my Smartphone, I promised myself to stay without one for at least a week, and use one of the good old basic phones—the ones that would serve my exact needs...or so I thought.

Through this challenge, not only have I learned the ancient lesson of 'getting used to living fancy', I learned that my needs have increased along with technology advancing. I learned how much better I could live without one, but also how I desperately need one to live in the now.

## DAY 1 - WITHOUT A SMART PHONE

This is obnoxious! I cannot believe how much I really miss checking my Facebook every five minutes! My hand keeps reaching for my phone, and just holding it reminds me how basic of a life I'm living right now. My heart keeps sinking at the thought of having to switch the laptop on for Facebook or the random browsing it leads to. Who even does that? I need to text someone about this. My Goodness, how long will I keep typing this text! I can't even write a status about it now! I give up!

## DAY 2

Where's my phone? What's the news? Oh. My phone...it's not smart enough. Wait, what? It's 9? I woke up at 9? On my own? Do I need to go to the bathroom? No. How did this happen? Am I going to have breakfast today? When did I last have breakfast on time? I don't have a headache. No need for coffee. I leave for work, with my phone in my hands, not really afraid of losing it or having it snatched. Everything seems different today, even then, I am in a surprisingly good mood today. Was it because I woke up early? Was it because the first thing I saw was my niece's smile and not my newsfeed? Whatever it was, it was good. I need to whatsapp someone about this. Status, maybe? Oh, my phone. Forget it.

Using a Smartphone, tablet, or laptop at bedtime may be staving off sleep, according to Harvard Medical School scientists, who have found specific wavelengths of light can suppress the slumber-inducing hormone melatonin in the brain. "We have biologically shifted ourselves so we can't fall asleep earlier," said Charles A. Czeisler, a professor of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School. "The amazing thing is that we are still trying to get up with the chickens." The result is less sleep — and less time for the body to recover. Routinely getting fewer than 8 hours of sleep compromises alertness, reaction time, efficiency, productivity and mood, according to Australia's Sleep Health Foundation. (Source: [newsmax.com](#))

## DAY 3

I could really get used to this mood. I'm in a much better mood all the time, not constantly having to read weird opinions of weird people, not having to always be alert for messages and whatsapp notifications. I have not felt this relaxed in a long time. Why did I never think this could take a toll on me? Why did it never occur to me that something so small, like having my messages 'seen' in a conversation I don't want to take part in, stressed me out a lot more than it should? I'm getting time to admire the beauty of the sky, without having my head tilted downwards. It's filling me up with whatever is the exact opposite of anxiety.

A new study has found that Smartphones can actually increase people's stress levels, HealthDay news reports. The reason, as HealthDay explains, is that Smartphones produce "a relentless need to immediately review and respond to each and every incoming message, alert or ping." The stress gets so bad for some users that they actually begin to feel phantom vibrations, thinking their phone is buzzing when it isn't. "Smartphone use is increasing at a rapid rate and we are likely to see an associated increase in stress from social networking," the study's leader, Richard Balding of the University of Worcester told the Telegraph. (Source: [huffingtonpost.com](#))

## DAY 4

I had a rather lovely conversation with my mother during breakfast (yes, I'm a regular on-time-breakfast-eater now!). Waking up in a good mood is actually helping me interact with my family more. It feels like I haven't spoken to them in ages, even though we all live under the same roof. The strangest thing happened last night, when a friend— who, by the way, is a Smartphone addict— put down his phone when he realised I wasn't engrossed in mine, and he conversed with me. It's definitely strange because I don't remember the last time we were out together, having a real and long conversation. But we did. And we learned new things about each other. We're both pretty good at Snake Xenzia, it turns out.

Findings suggest that technology has a negative effect on both the quality and quantity of face-to-face communication. Many have expressed shared concerns regarding the overuse of technology and its impact on face-to-face communication, so much so that some Los Angeles restaurants have banned the use of mobile devices to ensure customers enjoy both their meal and their company (Forbes, 2013). (Source: [elon.edu](#))

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

## DAY 5

I really thought it was because of getting older, or a hectic routine, but I was sure I would always have to live with a mild headache and fuzzy eyes. This was also why I used to drink around 5 cups of coffee or more a day. Now that the headaches are gone, I feel different and good inside. I am beginning to realise how intolerably silly I have been — never thought of how staring at my screen and reading those tiny letters off of it throughout the whole day was really the cause of all this pain. I have been torturing myself, and I didn't even know it.

Our various personal electronic devices emit blue light. We've started to have regular close-up nighttime exposure to this light only in the past 10 or 20 years, as a recent Gigaom story on the topic notes. Nighttime exposure to that light, which is emitted at high levels by Smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other LED screens, may be damaging your vision. It also suppresses production of the hormone melatonin, which throws off your body's natural sleep cues. When your melatonin levels and sleep cycle go haywire, your risk goes up for a wide range of ailments, from depression to cancer. (Source: [businessinsider.com](#))

## DAY 6

I really thought that neck ache I have been suffering from was also permanent and due to age. But no! All this texting, staring at the screen, and constant answering to bings, rings and zaps had pained me for long. It even has a name— text-neck or lposture. I realised how I would stay seated most of my day while moving from website to website, wasting hours on end. I move a lot now— physically. In fact, I dance on a regular basis now!

"Text Neck is not just a texting problem," says Dr. Dean Fishman. "Text neck is a gaming problem. Text neck is an e-mailing problem." Fishman originally coined the term in 2008 while examining a 17-year-old patient. The teen came in complaining of headaches and neck pain. As Fishman was trying to explain to the patient's mother exactly what the problem was, he glanced over and saw her posture. The teen was sitting in a chair, hunched over her Smartphone, texting away. (Source: [cnn.com](#))

## DAY 7

I picked up a book today in the morning. I finished it. Yep. I really did. You know why? Because I didn't lose concentration for a second! When was the last time I had such focus? I don't even remember. But boy, did it feel fantastic. I can't wait to begin another book. I read a lot anyway, but it would take me forever to finish one. I would get distracted by, once again, those incessant bings, rings and zaps. Not lasting more than 10 pages a day, my rate of books per month had decreased to an unimaginable low. What is bothering me is that this didn't bother me before now. What had that smarter-than-me phone done to me?

According to scientists, the age of Smartphones has left humans with such a short attention span even a goldfish can hold a thought for longer. Researchers surveyed 2,000 participants in Canada and studied the brain activity of 112 others using electroencephalograms. The results showed the average human attention span has fallen from 12 seconds in 2000, or around the time the mobile revolution began, to eight seconds. (Source: [telegraph.co.uk](#))

Today or tomorrow, I will buy a Smartphone again bringing back the bings, rings and zaps. My week is over.

You might ask, at this point, why I would go back. That is because of time. As time progresses technology progresses and it becomes inevitable for us to move forward to keep up. Surviving would become difficult without progressing along with progress. Now, I'm not saying we'll die without Smartphones. But I am missing the group conversations that my team is having on whatsapp about the newest story ideas. I have to catch up with my university notifications in my inbox. As much as I have a disliking for it, I must walk with the world in my palm to be a part of it, and that is the truth I must accept. But one thing I did learn— it is wonderfully refreshing to go back to basics once in a while and find the real charms of life again, and no, you won't find that in your phones. ■

