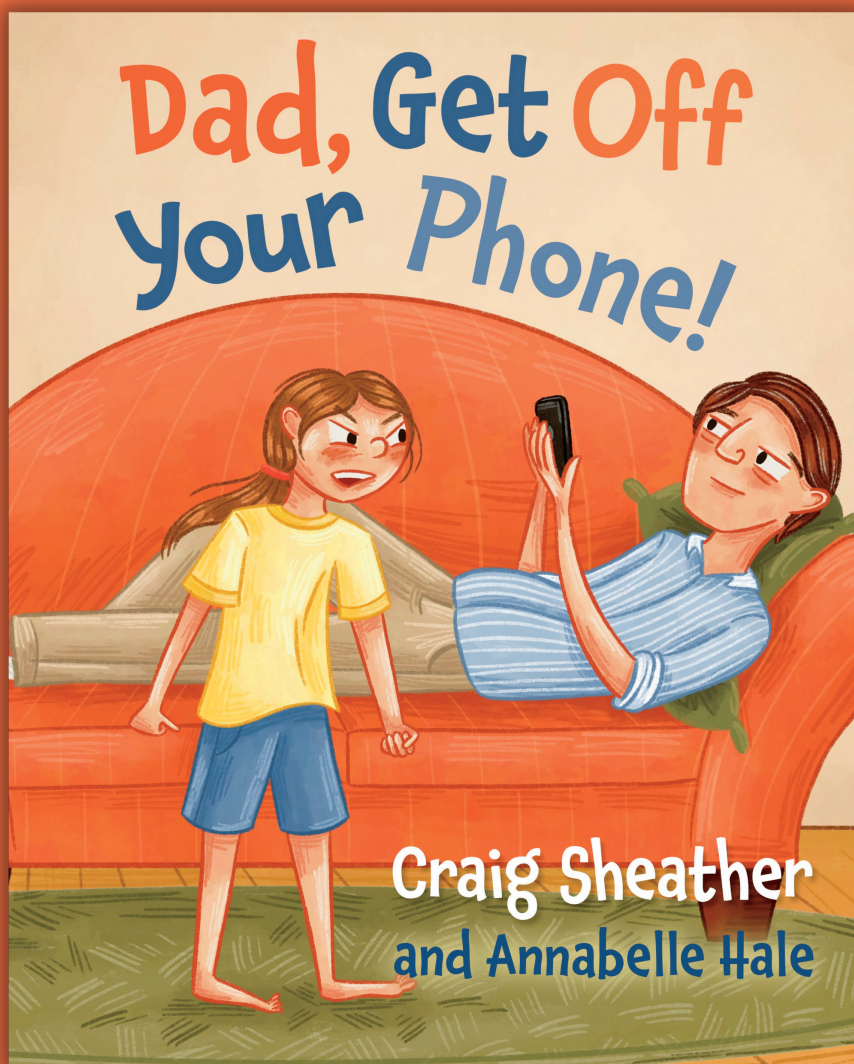


Dad, Get Off Your Phone!

TEACHING NOTES



BEFORE READING

Ask children what they think a zombie and a ninja are.

Share the following definitions to refer to during reading:

- **Zombie:**

- a person who is or appears lifeless, apathetic, or completely unresponsive to their surroundings.
- a person or reanimated corpse that has been turned into a creature capable of movement but not of rational thought



- **Ninja:**

- a person skilled in the Japanese art of ninjutsu that requires them to go unnoticed
- a person who excels in a particular skill or activity



DURING READING

- What does the author mean by the term 'Phone Zombie'?
- Draw attention to the illustrations and ask: How does Dad's appearance change throughout the book? Why?
- What does Dad mean by the term 'Tickle Ninja'?
- Why do you think Dad finds everything so scary when he first reaches the hiking trail? How do his reactions compare with Lyra's?
- What does Lyra mean when she says, 'Dad, slow down. You're missing everything!'
- How do things change after Dad stops and takes a deep breath in?
- What does Dad notice that he may otherwise have missed?
- When Dad and Lyra lie down towards the end, why do you think they don't speak for a while?
- How is Dad the 'Nature Zombie' so different to Dad the 'Phone Zombie'? Why?



AFTER READING

- Discuss the pros and cons of electronic devices and compare them with the benefits of spending time outdoors. Create class lists of both based on discussion and research (see the background information provided below for research prompts).
- Based on what students have learnt, ask how they might change how they use mobile phones and tablets.
- Over a period of four weeks, have students collect and graph data on the amount of time they spend outdoors compared with the time they spend on screen activities.
- Discuss why screen-free activities are so important and create a class list of as many of them as possible.
- Debate the topic 'Mobile phones are good for us'.
- Ask students to create an illustrated poster employing persuasive text to either sell the benefits of spending more time outdoors or spending less time on electronic devices.
- Have students research signs of mobile phone addiction and report back to the class.
- Include regular nature walks in your timetable, encouraging students to take notice of what is around them and to use their senses. Follow each walk with a creative activity that reflects their time spent outdoors.
- Ask students to share details of any hiking trails in their area or places they have visited. Students could draw maps of real or imagined trails.
- Australia is home to thousands of national parks and conservation reserves, including Kakadu National Park, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Royal National Park, and Blue Mountains National Park. Ask students to find out why these areas are so important to preserve and to choose one such area to research in depth. They should present their findings to the class, supported by visual cues.

- Bring in eucalyptus leaves for children to smell and attempt to play. Ask them to write lyrics to a song about eucalyptus trees.
- Conduct some lessons, such as free reading time, outside.
- Create a classroom or school garden for students to retreat to.
- Discuss First Nations peoples' deep connection to land and how it informs their culture and sense of well-being.
- Encourage students to take a deep, reflective breath in and out each time they leave and enter their classroom.
- Lyra made up inventive names for common Australian animals. Ask students to each choose an Australian animal to describe in a humorous way and to illustrate their creation.
- Use vocabulary from the text to create a class glossary or to add to a class spelling list:

backyard, binoculars, zombie, ninja, pounced, swiped, tickled, exploded, pleaded, collecting, favourite, whoosh, wildlife, spotter, leader, demanded, careful, creatures, warned, interrupted, suddenly, kangaroo, lethal, abruptly, scampered, eucalyptus, scampered, kookaburras, blue-tongue lizard, emu, echidna, towering, bubbling, thundering, cascaded, majestically, vibrant, glistened, misty, waterfall, energised, refreshed, trance, transformed, favourite

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current international consensus is that mobile phones don't cause cancer. However, cancer can take many years, even decades, to develop and population studies so far have only monitored the health effects following a few years of mobile phone use.

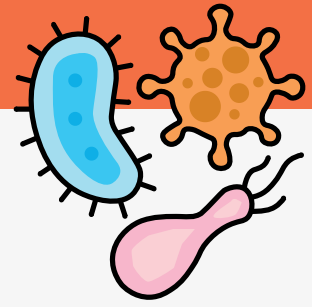
While it is unrealistic to get rid of our mobile devices and electronics, reducing our exposure will help protect us.

10 REASONS WHY MOBILE PHONES ARE BAD FOR US AND THE PLANET

1) EMF RADIATION EXPOSURE

Every electronic device emits Electromagnetic Field (EMF) radiation. With them glued to our bodies all day, our smartphones become a prevalent source of EMF radiation exposure. We receive more EMF radiation exposure from our phones than nearby cell towers. EMF radiation has been linked to a range of health issues.



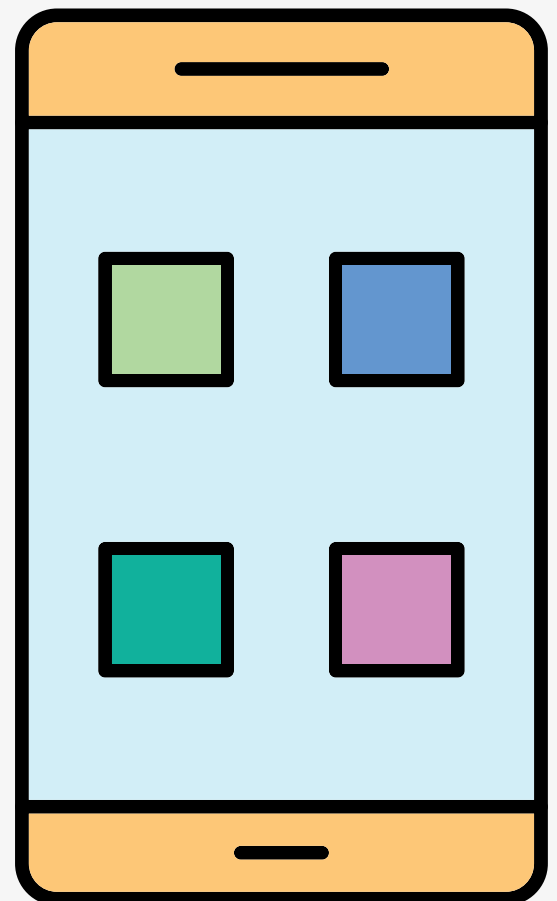


2) GERMS

Studies have shown that phones can carry 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats. Our phones are a breeding ground for germs because of how many different surfaces they come into contact with, and germs thrive on phones because they stay warm due to body and battery heat. When we share devices, germs spread from one person to the next.

3) BLUE LIGHT

Blue light is everywhere, from sunshine to fluorescent lighting, mobile devices, and electronic screens. Blue light has many benefits but too much of it is not good for us. Phones are the worst culprit because we hold our phones closest to our eyes where blue light can penetrate to the retina, increasing the risk for damaging light-sensitive cells. Exposure to blue light suppresses melatonin, the natural hormone related to sleep, thus throwing off our sleep cycles.



4) BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

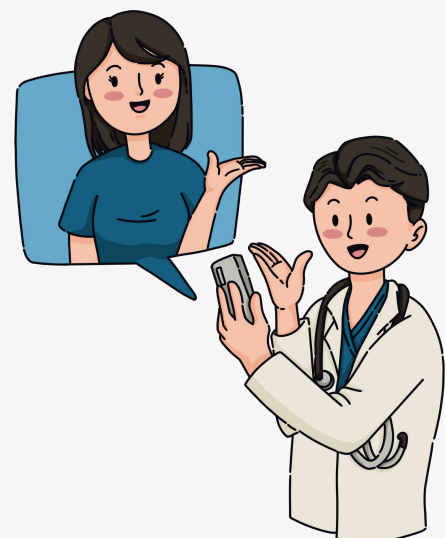


Our brain is a vulnerable organ and it is also the most important as it controls all bodily functions and processes. Smartphone use alters the brain and its development. Children's skulls are thinner than adults' which makes them more susceptible to harm. Research suggests a link between increased screen time during childhood and poor progression in key developmental areas such as communication skills, problem solving, and social interactions over time.

5) SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Our phones allow us to connect with others around the world. But the ability to do so has impacted social settings and face-to-face interactions. By being hyper-connected through phones, actual connections with other humans have declined.

Studies have shown that a lack of interaction between parents and their children can lead to developmental problems. The use of the internet on cell phones exposes children to inappropriate interactions. They can easily access sites showing age-inappropriate content. This can have a negative impact on them and lead to disturbing behaviours.



6) MENTAL HEALTH

Research has shown that social media and Internet addiction coupled with the negative impacts of EMF radiation are taking a toll on our mental health.

Nomophobia, the fear of losing our phone or being without it, stems from two factors. First, the feeling of anxiety generated by not having a phone. Second, our dependency on phones to do everything, eg keep phone numbers, Google answers, provide GPS directions.

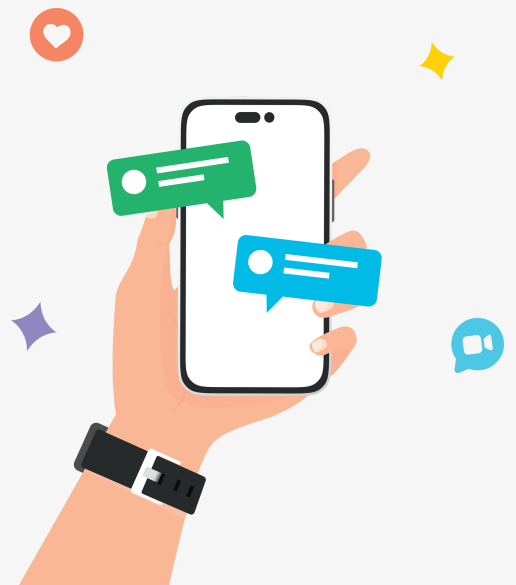
Less face-to-face interaction means compromised social relationships, a major risk factor for developing depression. Increased screen time on social media platforms creates a 'compare and despair' attitude and feelings of inadequacy, causing a rise in mental illness among youth.

In a study evaluating the psychosocial risks of smartphones, it was found we experience stress by feeling compelled to promptly respond to smartphone activity in order to maintain spontaneity and access with others.

When we receive a phone notification, it activates our sympathetic nervous system, triggering a shot of adrenaline, increasing our heart rate, pulse, and muscle tension, and transferring energy from our brain to our muscles. It can take up to 30 minutes for our body to return to homeostasis, but when phones are constantly pinging with alerts, it can lead to chronic stress.

7) DISTRACTION

The Coronavirus caused many people to increase their screen time, even though device usage was already high. Phones are an easy distraction and often it's easier to just stay occupied by your phone rather than do something else—or even while you are doing something else. Some experts blame the rise of smartphones for fuelling a multitasking culture. But the human brain can't consciously focus on more than one thing at a time and trying to do so has led to everything from lower academic test results to lower-quality social interactions, and even to more car and pedestrian accidents.



8) PHYSICAL PAIN

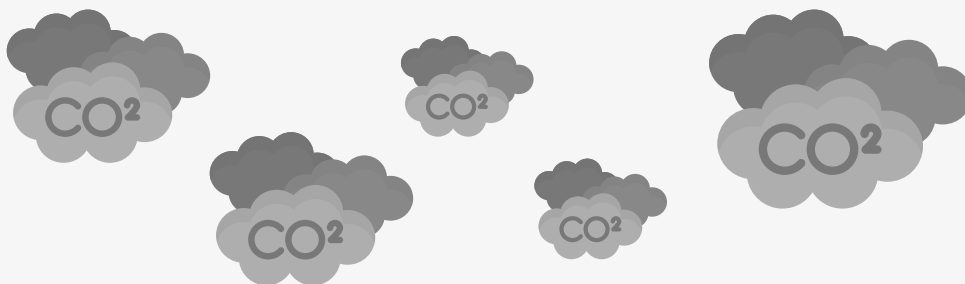
When we use our phone for activities besides phone calls, often we are looking down at it. 'Text neck' describes a repeated stress injury and pain in the neck resulting from excessive watching or texting on handheld devices over a sustained period. Text neck can lead to shoulder pain, upper back pain, headaches, and a hunched back. Eventually, it may cause early onset arthritis, spinal misalignment, spinal degeneration, disc compression, muscle weakness, and loss of lung capacity. In addition to text neck, 'text claw' refers to the feelings of soreness and cramping in your fingers, wrist, and forearm after spending too much time on your phone.

9) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

While devices are shrinking in size, the drastic rise in the number of devices and their power usage is detrimental.

Phones typically have a two-year average life cycle. Discarded electronics are the world's fastest growing waste problem.

The hardware within smartphones requires rare materials. The mining of those materials accounts for up to 95% of a device's total CO₂ emissions during its lifespan.



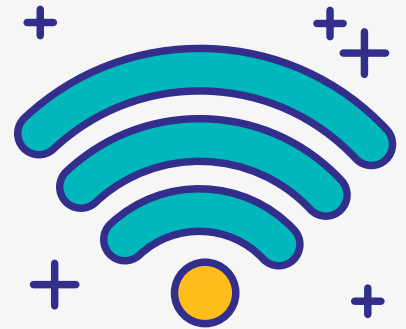
For your phone to send and receive data, it must be processed through data centres. These centres are massive warehouses full of servers, needing extensive power to run and to keep the servers cool.

With the introduction of 5G, we will exponentially increase our power usage and environmental footprint, and 5G and EMF frequencies have a negative effect on many plants, animals, and ecosystems.

10) PRIVACY AND SECURITY

The GPS chip in our phones tracks our every move and turning off our GPS won't make us untraceable. Public Wi-Fi is also a way people can be tracked. Recently, certain retailers have come under attack when it became known they were tracking shoppers when they connected to their stores' Wi-Fi.

Location tracking has its benefits, but it also allows hackers and thieves to know where our phones, and we, are. A person with malicious intent can use our location to determine where we live and work, what school we attend, when we are out, when we go on holidays, and pretty much all our daily movements and habits. And they can sell this information.



When we downloaded an app, we often agree to app permissions, usually without reading them. But why does a photo editing app need access to our GPS and contacts? Agreeing to provide personal information to unknown app developers is an invasion of our privacy.



10 REASONS SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS IS GOOD FOR US AND THE PLANET

1) BETTER BREATHING

Surprisingly, indoor concentrations of air pollutants are often two to five times higher than outdoor concentrations. The freshest air is found in places with high air circulation. Spending more time in natural green spaces could help lower our risk of respiratory illness.

2) IMPROVED SLEEP

Typically, our body's internal clock follows the sun. Exposing ourselves to sunlight can improve our sleep by:

- helping us feel more tired at night
- shortening the time it takes to fall asleep
- improving the quality of our rest.



3) REDUCED DEPRESSION

Sunlight can help ease low mood and fatigue. Some people believe sunlight has a protective effect since it helps our bodies produce vitamin D. It's also possible that sunlight improves sleep, which in turn reduces depression.

4) MORE MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE

Outdoor exercise can:

- make physical activity more interesting and enjoyable
- make it easier to socialise
- feel easier and less strenuous.



You don't have to complete a marathon. Any outdoor activity that gets your body moving offers health benefits.

5) MENTAL RESTORATION

Ongoing overstimulation raises our stress levels without us even realising it. The natural world, on the other hand, can offer a mental and emotional refuge when we need to unwind and recharge. Research suggests spending time in nature helps us feel more relaxed and focused, especially when we take the time to notice our surroundings.

6) BOOSTED IMMUNE FUNCTION

Air circulation can dilute viruses in the air. Spending time outdoors helps our immune systems to function optimally. Microorganisms found in nature that aren't dangerous run practice drills with our immune systems, helping to prepare them for more serious infections. If we live our lives in completely sterile environments, our immune systems can lose the ability to recognise what is and isn't dangerous. This can set off red alerts for any microorganism they come across, resulting in chronic inflammation.

7) PROTECTION FROM SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS

There's some evidence to suggest children who spend plenty of time outside have a lower chance of developing myopia (near-sightedness).

8) IMPROVED EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Outdoor time can do more than help relieve unwanted or painful emotions like fear, worry, and sadness. It also helps promote emotions you want to feel more of, like happiness, peace, and optimism.

9) INCREASED CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION



Spending time outside gives us a chance to become inspired. Science backs that up, showing that spending time outside stimulates our senses and helps get our creative juices flowing.

10) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The more time we spend outdoors, the more appreciative we become of the natural world and the more likely we are to respect and look after the amazing planet on which we live.



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Publisher: Woodslane Press

ISBN: 9781922800039

Format: Hardback

Size: 254 x 203

Release Date: March 2023

Pages: 32

RRP: \$27.99

