

Tech addition

Listen and fill in each blank with ONE OR TWO WORDS

Presenter: The sound of kids together. Or, at least, how it sounded a few years ago. Nowadays a group of, well, just about anyone – kids, teens, tweens, their parents – might sound a lot more like this ...

Most of us spend hours a day with our bent over our smartphones. Research suggests teenagers spend as many as nine hours a day, whilespend up to six.

Teen voice: I don't know, it's, like, the first thing I do in the morning, check in and see who's posted anything overnight. It's myso I kind of have to look at it and then, you know, it's pretty hard not to scroll through.

Presenter: And it's not just teenagers and millennials, Generation X and even the are almost as bad.

Adult voice: I'm online most of the day for work and you'd think I'd be sick of screens by the time I get home, but most of my comes through Facebook and I'm really into food so I'll hold my hands up to being one of those people whoof their meals.

Presenter: But are we addicted to our phones and apps? And does it matter? Former Google and Facebook certainly think so. So they've set up a non-profit organisation, the Center for Humane Technology, to reverse the.....attention crisis and promote safe technology for children.

Expert: Anyone who's seen round the block for the latest iPhone has to wonder what these people are thinking. You've literally got people sleeping in the street to get the newest device, probably not even talking to anyone else in the queue because they're on, taking selfies in the queue to post to Instagram. If that's not addiction, it's certainly obsession.

Presenter: A more formal definition of addiction describes it as a involvement with an activity, despite the harm it causes. Someone with an addiction has cravings – that feeling that you haven't checked your phone for two minutes and can't relax until you get your hands on it again. They may have a lack ofand not realise their behaviour is causing problems – like texting while cycling or falling off a cliff taking a selfie. And, in case

you're wondering, I read about both of those via the news app on my phone, which every couple of minutes with the latest stories ... definitely addicted. So the 'Truth about Tech' by Common Sense Media and the Center for Humane Technology couldn't come fast enough for most of us. But it's children who are probably most at risk because of the effect tech addiction might be having on their Professor Mary Michaels of the Atlanta Future Tech Institute has been working with very young children. Mary, thanks for dropping by. What is your research telling us?

Mary: Well, we know that screen time is affecting key aspects of healthy child development, like sleep,and what psychologists call 'serve and return' moments, which are when parents respond to babies seeking assurance and connection by making, smiling or talking. All perfectly normal things we do and which help lay the foundations of babies' brains. It's much harder to engage with a baby normally if you're looking at your phone. Or, even worse, if parents give a crying child a phone to them instead of talking to them or hugging them, and that might lead to them failing to develop their ability to regulate their own

Presenter: And what about older children?

Mary: Again, we know that teenagers who spend a lot of time on social media are 56 per cent more likely to report being unhappy and 27 per cent more likely to suffer Teenagers are especially vulnerable because they're more sensitive to highs and lows anyway, so we're looking at, potentially, higher instances of suicide, schizophrenia, and addiction in teens which is exacerbated by dependence on technology.

Presenter: It sounds like a vicious circle. They're more likely to get addicted to smartphones and social media and that addiction itself makes them for other addictions.

Mary: Yes, that's right.

Presenter: Time to stage an intervention! Is there anything we can do to make tech less addictive?

Mary: Setting devices to greyscale, which is basically black and white, might make them less Scrolling through a newsfeed of boring, washed-out photos just doesn't create the same rush as bright colours perhaps. And you can turn off thethat are constantly pulling you back in to check your phone.