



ST PAUL'S SCHOOL  
Est. 1509

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**  
**Assembly Plans**  
**Stress and Technology**

[Click here to access the PowerPoint that can be used to accompany these speaker notes.](#)

**Starter activity:**

*Ask the pupils how long they think they spend on their phones each day*

New research conducted by British psychologists shows that young adults use their smartphones roughly twice as much as they estimate that they do. In fact, the small preliminary study found that these young adults used their phones an average of five hours a day — that's roughly one-third of their total waking hours.

*Show slide one which shows UK average media usage. Millennials use their smartphones almost twice as often as the average adult.*

**The signs that you have an unhealthy relationship with your phone** ([Huffington Post](#))

*Show slide two; 'The Signs'. Ask pupils if they recognise the signs in themselves and use the explanations below to talk them through how or why it might be time to change their habits.*

**1. You Have To Respond... Immediately**

If unanswered texts or emails get your heart rate going, there's a good chance that your smartphone is adding stress to your life rather than making it easier. Constantly interrupting what you're doing — whether it's writing a college essay or spending some quality time with your friends — to check your phone might be an indication that your behavior has become compulsive.

**2. You Have Phantom Cellphone Syndrome**

You could've sworn you felt your phone vibrating in your back pocket, but when you took it out, you saw that nothing had happened. Phantom cellphone vibration syndrome is a real sign of technology addiction — and it's more common than you might think. A study conducted at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne found that a whopping 89 percent of undergrads had experienced feeling nonexistent cellphone vibrations.

**3. You Have A Bad Case Of FOMO**

Are you constantly thinking about what everyone else is doing and all the things you might be missing out on at any given moment? Does scrolling through party photos and enthusiastic weekend updates on your News Feed make you feel sad or anxious?

#### **4. You're Not Paying Attention To Your Friends & Family**

We've all be there — you're having dinner with friends or family with your phone sitting next to your plate, and instead of ignoring it, you turn your attention away from the conversation to respond to a text. While there's nothing wrong with picking up important calls or excusing yourself to answer messages when necessary — but if you make a habit of giving only half your attention to the people you're with while the other half is busy checking Twitter, it might be time to rethink your phone habits.

#### **5. You Feel Restless When You're Away From Your Phone**

If you experience withdrawal when you can't check your phone or respond to messages, you might have a technology addiction. Studies have found that turning off their phones can induce physical and mental withdrawal symptoms similar to those exhibited by drug addicts. If you feel yourself becoming nervous and antsy when you're away from your phone, take note of those feelings and find a coping mechanism — taking deep breaths, going for a walk or exercising could help you get past the anxiety.

#### **6. Poor Performance In School**

If you're having an increasingly difficult time focusing in class and eagerly await the ringing of the bell so that you can check your phone and return that unanswered text, an Internet or smartphone addiction could be partially to blame for low grades.

#### **What is the link between technology and mental health?**

In a survey of 1,787 adults between 19 and 32, researchers found that people who used social media the most were "significantly" more likely to be depressed. People who used it the least, on the other hand, were the least likely to be depressed

Good sleeping patterns are incredibly important for our general wellbeing but the blue light emitted by screens on cell phones, computers, tablets, and televisions restrain the production of melatonin, the hormone that controls your sleep/wake cycle or circadian rhythm. Reducing melatonin makes it harder to fall and stay asleep.

There's also increasing evidence that using social media can cause thought patterns and behaviours that increase the risk of anxiety and depression. Cyber-bullying and the 'fear of missing out'/FOMO are on the increase and make us feel less resilient when things get tough.

#### **How can we ensure we use technology in the right way?**

1. Think about all the ways in which technology can be a positive thing. Make sure you're aware of websites like YoungMinds that offer online help, including a webchat for people experience mental health issues.

*Show 'useful apps' slide*

There are also apps you can download to help you relax (such as Headspace) or apps which limit the amount of time you can spend online or on social networks.

It's also well worth taking a look at the [Mental Health Foundation's 16 free podcasts](#) to help you live a mentally happier life - from New Years' Resolutions to Relaxation for Better Sleep to Mindfulness and How to Overcome Fear and Anxiety.

2. To make sure technology isn't harming your slumber, give yourself at least 30 minutes of gadget-free transition time before hitting the hay. Even better: Make your bedroom a technology-free zone—keep your electronics outside the room (that includes a TV!).

3. Consider going on a 'digital detox' – see if you can go a few days without using social media. Be sure to let your friends know what you're doing in advance so they aren't worried about you. If that's too much, think about times of the day where you might reduce your phone usage; e.g. leaving it in your room during meal times or your locker during the school. Think carefully before quitting social media and technology forever; going 'Cold Turkey' might actually make you feel worse.

### **Further Information/Support**

#### [List of Apps to Support Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

[Ditch the Label](#) is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-bullying charities, which provides innovative support (emotional, psychological and physical) to those who have been affected by bullying through digital environment.

[How to Avoid Feeling Depressed on Facebook](#), Lancaster University Review

[ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND DEPRESSION AMONG U.S. YOUNG ADULTS](#), US National Institute of Mental Health

[Using Multiple Social Media Platforms May Lead to Depression and Anxiety](#), Vogue, 2016

Figure 1. Time Adults Spend Using Different Media in the UK

