

“Silent Mode - A Week Without my Phone” -

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The average teen spends upwards of seven hours on their phone every day. Let's do the maths, 25,200 seconds, 420 minutes, 7 hours per day for a lifetime? The average person will have spent over 26 years worth of time on their phone by the time they die. That statistic is disconcerting, alarming even.

I hate my phone. I really do. I spend too much of my time waiting for that noise, to hear a “buzz” or a “ding”. Checking my phone for notifications at least 30 times a day. It's addictive. That is a fact. But what would happen if that noise just stopped, if one day, I stopped waiting for those texts or trends.

I decided to lock up my phone for a week. I put it in my mom's bedside locker, and there it stayed, for seven days straight! People thought I was mad! My friends thought it couldn't be done, even my teachers were sceptical. My parents were thrilled that I had made this decision though! In truth, I was sick of my phone. However, digital detox is like being isolated from the world around you.

Was it agitating to figure out lifts to extra-curricular activities everyday with my friends? Absolutely. Was it hard to hear about the trends on social media over the week I lacked my phone? Undoubtedly. Was it near impossible to not reach for the aid of Google when I didn't understand something? Totally. Having said all this, with each day that passed, devoid of my phone, I began to appreciate the world around me and rediscover a sense of calm I never realised was missing.

“It's because of that stupid phone” is something that I hear from my parents every day without fail. If I don't do my homework, “It's because of that stupid phone”. If I fight with my brother, “It's because of that stupid phone”. It annoys me more and more each time that I hear it. But the longer I think about it the clearer it becomes, that maybe it is all because of that stupid phone. If my phone wasn't attached to me would I have more time to study, to talk to my family, to do things I enjoy?

That mindless dictator we all keep in our pockets, an endless source of anxiety, was making me forget about the things I do for me.

So, what did I do with my week? Nothing astonishing, I just lived for me! It wasn't about grand gestures, it was about laughing at the little things and doing what I love! I bettered myself, learning lines for my musical, finishing projects, going for runs. I enjoyed myself, watching my favourite movies and playing card games. I had more time to devote to others, I

helped on the farm, I visited my grandparents, I cooked for my family. Without the distractions of a phone, I was more present and connected to those and the world around me.

As the week progressed, my mood changed. I was getting happier and more content with the passing of each day. It was as though I had been wearing a pair of sunglasses for the last three years of my life. Suddenly everything became brighter. I felt more relaxed with myself and more at ease with the world. As silly as it may sound, everything became more positive!

The constant “buzz” and distractions had been replaced by moments of joy and appreciation. Would I ever do this again? Would I lock up my phone for yet another week? Without question! I learned a lot from the past week. I was reminded about how much of my life and the world I was missing by constantly being tied to technology. My eyes were opened up to all the things that we can do with our lives that we will cherish for years to come instead of wasting precious time on a pocket-sized nightmare. I do not want to regret not living my best life!

The average teen spends upwards of seven hours on their phone every day. 26 years of their lifetime! This statistic, though alarming, is a wake-up call. We need to break the vicious cycle of excessive screen usage and reclaim our time in this life. And it might be easier than you think- the thought of being phoneless is actually worse than the reality. To be honest- it's nice to prove your friends (and teachers) wrong sometimes! If this week has taught me anything, it's that we hold the power to make the moments that truly matter count. Now if I make bad choices, at least it won't be because of that 'stupid phone'!