

Phone Detox

Bring sanity to your most intense
technological relationship

Introduction

The dark truth is that it has become very hard to find anyone (and certainly anything) more interesting than one's smartphone.

This perplexing and troubling realisation has for most of us had huge consequences for our love stories, family lives, work, leisure time and health. There is almost no relationship in which the presence of the phone has not had a profound impact. The genuine beauty and interest of our phones wouldn't be a matter of such concern if we did not suspect, somewhere in our minds, that while this machine has opened some doors, it is in danger of grievously closing others. The *Phone Detox* book knows we love our phones and would never want us to give them up, but it is also gently aware that these delightful gadgets bear a hidden cost. This book is a tool that aims to bring a little sanity to our closest, most intense and possibly most danger-laden technological relationship ●

Because of our phones,
we may find ourselves
incapable of sitting
alone in a room with our
own thoughts floating
freely in our heads,
daring to wander into
the past and the future,
allowing ourselves to
feel pain, desire, regret
and excitement.

Addiction

We might not be injecting illegal substances or sousing ourselves in alcohol, but we are almost all addicts of one kind or another. Addiction is dependence on something, anything, that keeps our real hopes and fears at bay: it is (more broadly) any and every routine we deploy to avoid a fair and frank encounter with our own minds.

To say we are addicted to our phones is not merely to point out that we use them a lot. It signals a darker notion: **that we use them to keep our own selves at a safe distance.** We are addicted to our phones not because we rely on them for practical purposes, but to the extent that we recruit them to a harmful project of self-avoidance

They do not mean to hurt us. But we may – and probably do – use them to injure ourselves. Addiction sounds horrible. But it is a hard name for a normal inclination: a habit of running away from the joys and terrors of self-knowledge ●



Monasticism

For centuries, Christian monks and nuns built remote, austere (and often very beautiful) places to live, frequently constructed round quiet arcades with tranquil gardens at their core.

They went to such trouble because, above all else, they were concerned about one thing: distraction. They were acutely aware of our native inability to get the best out of our minds: they understood how vague and jumpy our thoughts can be. And they took the problem of disturbance with utmost seriousness. They so wanted to concentrate on what was important to them that they took immense care to wall themselves off from the instantly alluring (but often frankly worthless) distractions offered by the wider and wilder world.

Their efforts are moving because – as we painfully realise – they were right. Our minds are by nature like mad monkeys,

restlessly flitting from one fleeting diversion to another, while all the things we really care about get neglected. But tragically, our society, and culture does not build us cloisters.

It places in our hands ever-open conduits to everything that could possibly divert our minds: real estate, porn, the news, social chit-chat, strident opinion, games, special offers, puzzles, the twelve best hotels somewhere, the weirdest doings of the weirdest strangers, and the intimate lives of every celebrity on the planet. We are almost powerless to resist because so many clever, hard-working people are devoting their lives to making money by capturing, if only for a few seconds, the most precious thing we possess: the focus of our minds – and our time. Even without the slightest feeling of religious conviction, we might pine for the cloister ●

