

Hello . What I would like to talk about today are cell phones and their role in our lives. Before I start off, I would like to ask everyone to turn their phones off—not just on a silent mode, but completely off—for the duration of my speech. It won't take more than 10 minutes, so please, kindly do me a favor. It will mean a lot to me to have all of your attention.

Ever since the first hand-held mobile phone was presented by Motorola in 1973, this handy gadget has firmly set itself in the hands of almost every American teenager, adult and since recently, even children. It seems that in the race for the latest model of iPhone or BlackBerry, we have forgotten that telephones were initially intended as a convenience, not a necessity. However, it seems that there isn't a single activity people can do without this technology nowadays. You need your Android program to calculate calories while jogging; you can't live without the latest tunes uploaded to your iPhone; and you got used to taking pictures everywhere you go with your many-mega-pixel phone camera. How often do we actually use phones for talking these days? And we are not talking about the latest applications you have purchased to upgrade your favorite time-killer, but rather using the phone for the purpose it had been initially intended for: mobile conversations, assuming you cannot talk to the person on the other end of the signal face-to-face.

One of the recent studies held by the Swiss Institute of Public Health has revealed the appearance of a new type of disease called Nomophobia ("No mobile phobia"). Disturbing signs of nomophobia include a pathological fear of finding oneself without a working cell phone at hand, which causes sleeping disorders (the diseased patients complained that they experience constant anxiety and often wake up at night because they seem to have heard their phone ring); fear of losing your cell phone or forgetting it somewhere (it causes people to return home if they cannot find the phone in the bag, no matter how late they will be for important appointments; or constantly checking for their phone and taking it out of the bag even if it isn't ringing). Apparently, there are thousands of people already diagnosed with the disorder and presumably millions more who are also suffering from it, without realizing the fact. Scientists estimate that two thirds of the world's population is in fact prone to this psychological disorder.

As a result, people make their lives dependent on a device, without realizing that it is an appliance that had been initially invented to make their lives simpler, not more complicated. As neurologists have commented, cell phone addiction is forcing people to become completely dependent on their pricey new gadget and this distracts the victims of cell phones from living their life in working order. Instead of going out and meeting people we want to talk to, we send text messages, install Skype and social network applications on our brand new phones, and basically build our lives around this technology. If one day all phones should instantly go off, there would no doubt be panic and chaos all over the world, except for those remote places where this technological advance has not yet gained that much popularity. Nevertheless, while there are fewer and fewer such places in the world, people are getting more and more dependent on their cell phones—approximately 40 per cent of all cell phone users have more than one mobile phone in use. The situation is worsening every year, while electronic giants like Apple, Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Verizon, and others are launching new brilliant marketing campaigns trying to persuade us to purchase their latest telephone model that can become your life partner in any occupation and situation. Except that, at some point, you might find yourself controlled by the device and desperately scared to take a step without it.

What should be done now? I suggest reducing the time we spend with our favorite cell phones at least by half, for starters. Every time you think about downloading a new application, ask yourself whether it is a necessity or you can easily do without it. Every time you catch yourself thinking that you want the latest model of iPhone, ask yourself what it is that you need it for? If you do not know the answer, it means you don't really need it, until the commercials and iconic pop stars tell you otherwise. Respect yourselves and value your time. When you think of how many hours per day you spend with your phones, and what you could have done instead in the real world, these time-eaters will seem like a malady. But, they are just a device, a convenience that we need to control our use of, in order not to let this appliance control us, our schedules, our leisure, our hobbies and our entire lives. I hope my speech gave you all some food for thought, and planted a seed of suspicion about whether our cell phones are truly that important and indispensable to us. Thank you for the time you have dedicated to my speech with your cell phones off! I know it was tough for some of you, and I appreciate the effort.