

Distracted Parenting: Is Your Smartphone to Blame?

The number of people, age 13 and older, who own smart phones increased from 9 million in 2007 to 114 million in 2012. During that same time, the CDC reported an increase in non-fatal unintentional injuries in kids under age 5. A fluke? Maybe. But E.R. doctors worry. Are parents distracted by smart phone use while watching their children?

During the same time period, the ER reported falls, wondering into traffic, near drownings, traumatic injuries and deaths. Some parents told doctors that they were not watching their children. There is no evidence that directly links smart phone distraction with this increase in injuries. However, physical injury to a child could be the result when a parent is distracted by emails, texts and social media.

Scientists tell us that parts of the brain that process sights and sounds can get *full*. Tasks can overwhelm the brain. As a result, the brain's ability to process information may be compromised. You may not notice that your child has darted in front of a car while you are busy on your phone.

Safety is not the only concern. Smart phone use distracts parents from normal child-rearing practices. Addiction to smart

phone actions competes with a parent's time spent with their child.

Phone usage interrupts mealtime talks, quiet play before bed, even walks in the park. Instead of enjoying a moment with your child, you spend minutes "liking" people's posts. A child may feel neglected. The parent-child bond could suffer.

Smart phones are a part of today's daily routines. In some cases, they enable parents to be at home while staying in contact with work. That same contact can also create anxiety as phone time competes with family time.



If you frequently look at your phone:

- Reevaluate your priorities. *Put your family first.*
- Set boundaries. Put phones away during meals, bedtimes and family events.
- ***Always keep your eyes on your child when near water or at play in a park.***
- Limit time spent on the phone when you are with your child. Play, read, talk and sing with your child – *without looking at your phone.*

To learn more, log on to:

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/02/smartphone.aspx>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/growing-friendships/201412/are-you-distracted-parent>

Search for *Distracted Parenting* on your favorite search engine.

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