



## Reflections

# Managing Nomophobia

NOMOPHOBIA is the word that, somewhat humorously, refers to 'no mobile phobia' where someone experiences fear, restlessness and anxiety if they can't access a working mobile device.

In August 2018, I wrote an article entitled 'We need a digital Sabbath' and many people, including some young parents, commented on how hard it is to observe the digital Sabbath — to go without access to mobile devices on one day a week. In fact, I drew up a weekly planner for a few to help manage this

nomophobia, and encouraged them to go out to engage in face-to-face relationships.

Now, as the Covid-19 virus discourages face-to-face meetings, I have had to go back on my words and encourage mobile use to help combat various anxieties, including the present pandemic anxiety.

For most of us, including the amateur users, our mobile devices have been timely liberators, helping us to connect in many ways, especially spiritually, socially, economically and academically.

While they are highly useful,

they can also cause great harm if we are unaware of the pitfalls. Recent neuroscience research warns us of the potential addictiveness that increased mobile use can create.

We see the confirmation of this research when people are fiddling with their digital devices restlessly late at night, or while they are out in the car, or walking while pushing a child in a pushchair. This addiction is thought to increase the GABA neurotransmitter in the brain causing anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and many more physical and mental health

complications.

And, we know that sexual predators all over the world have been taking advantage of people's screen addiction during this pandemic.

Perhaps if we attempt to put the following suggestions into practice it might help us manage our nomophobia:

- Engaging with family, friends and colleagues in an open conversation about the benefits and the harm that mobile use brings to our lives — and the need to be vigilant against nomophobia.

- Creating 'mobile free zones' and promoting the

'digital Sabbath' every now and then during the week,

- Being a role model to others i.e. following the commonly agreed mobile use restrictions with family, friends and work colleagues.

'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery' (Galatians 5:1).

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