**SAMPLE CONTENT THAT CAN BE USED IN PUBLICATIONS:**

## Outsmart Your Smartphone: 7 Ways To Find Happiness, Balance, and Connection in a Tech-Obsessed World

In our technology-obsessed world, we now use our smartphones for work, information, and entertainment. As a result, we have developed a new set of emotional and behavioral patterns—patterns that make us feel unhappy, unbalanced, and unconnected.

But it’s not like we can just "quit" our phones—we’re reliant on them for our livelihood, communication, and the short bursts of happiness they give us. We’re in a predicament where our phones are hurting our happiness, yet we can’t stop using them. So, how do we beat this “[smartphone syndrome](https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/smartphone-syndrome-quiz.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)?”
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I spent the last year trying to answer this question for my new book, *[Outsmart Your Smartphone](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1684033497/ref%3Das_li_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=berkwellbein-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=1684033497&linkId=4ea15511a91ec040cf1ba966de3ce935" \t "_blank)*. Here are 7 key steps from the book—steps that can help you build a healthier relationship with technology… and you won’t even have to throw out your phone.

## 1. Build Foundational Skills

It’s not uncommon for us to [give up on something](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57309137ab48de6f423b3eec/t/5807a317e6f2e1c142fdfa25/1476895514617/Weiner1992.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) if we aren’t successful. So if we try to create a better relationship with our phones in ways that are too challenging for us, we might struggle, get frustrated, and eventually give up. We give up on our goals because we have learned something—we’ve learned that we can’t possibly do this darn thing. We must just be stupid or broken or something. So we figure, why try?
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That’s why it’s so important to begin outsmarting your smartphone by building some foundational skills. Firstly, we want to set ourselves up for success by being clear about our goal to outsmart our smartphone. One way to do this is by committing to the [28-Day Challenge to Outsmart Your Smartphone](https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/smartphone-challenge.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or by starting our own [Outsmart Your Smartphone Activity Group](https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/uploads/1/9/4/8/19481349/activity_group_questions__1_.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). These activities help provide a clear timeline, set schedule, and social support--[all things which help us stay on track](https://psycnet.apa.org/buy/1996-06593-013%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) with our goals.

## 2. Stay Present

In our technology-crazed world, instead of spending even a second alone with ourselves—our thoughts, emotions, and whatever else is in there—we reflexively turn to our phones for entertainment, comfort, or distraction. Many of us are even on our phones at work, in the bathroom, and even during sex. That’s why a key skill for happiness in the technology age is leaning how to stay present.
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We can do this by learning how to manage our fear of missing out, [limiting our technology use in small but intentional ways](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_be_less_self_centered_when_using_technology%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), and by [taking mindful moments](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201902/what-is-mindfulness-and-how-be-more-mindful%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). When we take time to do these things, we remind ourselves what we’re missing out on when we give all our attention to our phones.

## 3. Make Meaningful Connections

The great irony in the age of technology is that we have more ways to connect than ever, yet we have never been more **[disconnected](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5598785/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[in the ways that matter for our health](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5598785/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and happiness.
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But technology is not going anywhere, and it seems impossible (or at least unrealistic) for us to completely stop using technology for social connection. So, it seems to me, the only real solution is to devote extra time and energy to creating happy, [healthy relationships](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201804/how-keep-your-smartphone-hurting-your-relationships%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**[both online and offline](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201804/how-keep-your-smartphone-hurting-your-relationships%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**. For example, we can learn how to stop our smartphones from hurting our in person interactions, we can [focus our attention on others](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201803/4-ways-cultivate-kindness-online%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (rather than ourselves) when we’re on social media, and [communicate kindly when we text](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201710/6-tips-decoding-emotions-in-text-messages%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). By learning these skills, we can connect with others in the ways that fuel happiness.

## 4. Manage Your Emotions

Which skills are the most important for happiness in the technology age? To find the answer, I posted a [well-being quiz](https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/well-being-survey.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) on my website. Among the thousands of people who took the quiz, the people who tended to be the happiest had high self-compassion, positivity, and resilience. This suggests that these skills are important skills to build in this technology-crazed world. And it makes sense that managing emotions is so important now in technology age, because when we [manage emotions effectively](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201810/how-control-your-emotions-when-they-are-out-control%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), we no longer need to rely on our smartphones (or other crutches like alcohol, shopping, or food) to manage our emotions for us.

## 5. Practice Kindness

Algorithms decide the news we read, the posts we see, and the people we meet. As a result of technology, most of us now exist in our own [filter bubbles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filter_bubble%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)—bubbles that increasingly lead us to think that people different from us are wrong, bad, or simply crazy. These bubbles can lead us to become unkind—online, in-person, or even just in our thoughts. And it turns out this is a big problem because kindness is like rocket fuel for happiness--[engaging in kind acts makes our lives more enjoyable](http://repository.essex.ac.uk/12649/1/KindNewActsSWL13_SubmittedRev.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

That’s why kindness is so important in the technology age. Now, I’m not asking you to be “nice”, perfect, or even polite—that’s not the type of kindness we need right now. I’m suggesting you practice kindness in ways that work for you. For example, you could try practicing kindness by living your values, finding your purpose, or making positive impacts in the world. By finding the ways kindness feels best to you, you’ll be more likely to benefit from it.

## 6. Be True to Yourself

Our daily lives consist of us consuming media (both social media and regular media). So we absorb unrealistic expectations for how our romantic relationships should be, what we should look like, and even what we should be doing between the sheets with our sexual partners. It’s no wonder our [social media profiles are merely presentations of who we think we should be](https://escholarship.org/content/qt1h97773d/qt1h97773d.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and not reflections of who we really are. But it’s also why it’s so important we learn how to be true to ourselves in the technology age.
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To do this, we can practice being ourselves (online and IRL), speaking up for our needs, and opening ourselves up to others. When we build these skills, we likely have an easier time living our lives, authentically, on our own terms.

## 7. Beat the Hedonic Treadmill

After you’ve learned some skills to outsmart your smartphone, you’ll inevitably reach the dreaded happiness plateau, and perhaps even start sliding back to where you were. This phenomenon is known as the “[hedonic treadmill](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1920&context=soss_research" \t "_blank)”. It means that we can do many things to change our lives and increase our happiness—things that do work for a bit—but if we simply continue doing these same things over and over, they’ll eventually lose their “punch”. It can end up feeling like you are on a treadmill, forever running and not getting anywhere.

Luckily, we can get off the hedonic treadmill and [better sustain our gains in happiness](https://www.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/496/layous-lyubomirsky-in-press.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) by pursuing happiness in more social ways, getting out of our comfort zone, and making happiness a part of our daily routine. By implementing these strategies, you’ll ensure your smartphones doesn’t outsmart you and put yourself on the right track for long-term happiness, even in this screen-obsessed world.