



My 'SART' goal

Last October, I had lunch with a friend. During our conversation, he asked me a question and I should have known the answer, but didn't. I confessed to him that the answer lived in my phone. Then it hit me: I think my smartphone is making me dumber!*

When I was a kid, I loved Encyclopedia Britannica. Thirty hardcover books containing so much knowledge. I spent hours exploring them. Today, that information lives in my iPhone, which is really convenient. Too convenient, apparently, because the opening story isn't the only time I've caught my brain sipping an umbrella drink on the beach.

This phenomenon isn't the only complaint I have about my smartphone. I find it much harder to be present with family and friends when my phone is nearby. Think about how many notifications, beeps, buzzes, and rings you get during a day. Each one of those is a tug away from whomever you're with or whatever you're doing. I'm either present or I'm not, and I want to be the former.

So, my goal for 2019 is to reduce the amount of time I spend on my phone to half. First up on the chopping block is mindless time-wasting spent on apps and social media. I will survive just fine if I don't check Lincoln Journal Star, ESPN, and LinkedIn three times a day. Second, I plan to read more physical books and fewer e-Books on my Kindle this year. Third, I am turning off nearly all notifications, beeps, and buzzes on my phone. I need fewer distractions in my life, not more.

To track my phone usage, I downloaded an app called Moment. Thus far, I spend an average of 1 hour and 5 minutes a day on my phone, roughly a third of which is reading on the Kindle app. (For comparison, the average Moment user spends nearly four hours a day on their phone.) Since I didn't start tracking my screen time until after I decided to reduce it, I don't have a great baseline. So, this goal of mine is more 'SART' than 'SMART' and won't qualify for peer review.

Many of you are probably wondering if I will also revert to a horse and buggy to get around town, or if I will return to a camcorder to record my kids' every movement. I can assure you this goal is not anti-progress or anti-technology. Annie Dillard once said, "How you spend your days is, of course, how you spend your life." This is really about me being more cognizant of how I spend my time. If you've done something similar and have some tips, please reach out!

**Don't believe me? Google "smartphones make us dumber" and see what you find.*

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