

Two Days With No Phone

Experts worry that teen texting is out of control. Could you give up your phone for 48 hours? Our brave volunteers did.

Extra Resources Online!

- BONUS QUIZ
 - COMMON CORE GAME
 - 3 READING LEVELS
 - LISTEN & READ AUDIO
 - LESSON PLAN
 - GRAPHIC ORGANIZER
- www.scholastic.com/actionmag

Name: _____

Cite Your Evidence

Read "Two Days With No Phone" on pages 4-6 of this issue of *Action* magazine. Then answer the questions below. Be sure to use details from the text (text evidence) to support your responses.

Question	Response	Text Evidence
1. What effect might too much texting have on a student's relationships?		
2. What is "sleep texting"?		
3. What does the word <i>adolescents</i> mean in Dr. Dowdell's quote about sleep needs?		
4. Make a prediction about Kenny and Franchesca. Which student is more likely to text less in the future than they did before the experiment?		
5. A teen checks his phone every five minutes, and his mood changes when he doesn't have access to his phone. Might he have an addiction?		

Instead of sleeping, Kenny Alarcon, 16, often texts with his friends through the night. "You get an urge," explains the teen, who lives in the Bronx in New York City. "When I get a text, I'm itching to respond to it even if I want to sleep."



"My friends thought I was crazy for doing this. After I got my phone back, everyone was joking, 'The ghost is back!'" —Kenny Alarcon

Franchesca Garcia, a high school senior from Providence, Rhode Island, has also felt the need to stay constantly connected. We asked how many texts she sent and received each day. "I don't know . . . maybe 1,000?" she answered. "It's too many to count."

It probably won't surprise you that teens are texting more than ever before. (See page 24 for a chart with teen-texting **statistics**.) Some experts are worried about how all that texting is affecting teenagers' lives.

Teens in Trouble?

One concern is that students might not learn correct grammar and spelling if most of the writing they do is made

up of text messages. Some people also worry that because teens text so much, they don't spend enough time talking with others face-to-face. That could be hurting their relationships with friends and family.

Plus, all that texting (and time on social media) takes away from hours that could be spent studying, exercising, pursuing a hobby, or just relaxing.

Dr. Elizabeth Dowdell is a professor at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. She says that many people expect to be able to **access** anyone or to *be* accessed by anyone at any time. "It's very appealing, especially

to a middle or high school student," she explains. "The problem is, there's no downtime." And people need downtime—especially when it comes to sleep.

Sleep Texting

Both Franchesca and Kenny told us that they wake up several times during the night to text. Kenny even sleeps with his phone beneath his pillow.

Dr. Dowdell says that it's common for teens' sleep to be interrupted by texts. Sometimes teens even send texts filled with nonsense words when they don't wake up all the way. She has been studying this trend, which she calls "sleep texting."

Why is sleep texting a problem? "Adolescents need a solid 8, 10, even 11 hours of sleep to really function and to think clearly," reports Dr. Dowdell. If they regularly lose sleep, she adds, teens may start



"When I gave my phone away, the first day I went crazy. I thought the phone was ringing but I didn't have the phone!" —Franchesca Garcia

Vocabulary

statistics: a set of numbers that presents information

access: reach, get in touch with

depressed: feeling very sad for a long period of time

isolated: all alone, separated from others

addiction: a strong need for something, such as drugs

having trouble in school. They may become grumpy, angry, or **depressed**. A lack of sleep can lead to weight gain and even obesity. That's because many people turn to junk food for quick energy when they are tired.

The 48-Hour Challenge

According to Dr. Dowdell, teens need to learn that they can—and should—turn off their phones sometimes. So we decided to have Kenny and Francesca do an experiment.

These were the rules: No phone for 48 hours. No computer or Internet either, unless it was for schoolwork. No Twitter, no Instagram.

Would these two teenagers be able to do it?

"I think I'm going to feel really **isolated**," Kenny worried. Francesca was nervous but brave. "I'm excited for the challenge," she said. "I don't know what's going to happen."

Kenny and Francesca handed their phones to their mothers for safekeeping. The challenge was on.

The Results

We caught up with Kenny and Francesca after 48 phone-free hours. "Wow, it was pure torture," Kenny joked. But though life with no phone wasn't easy, he

admitted "it had benefits."

Sure, Kenny missed his friends, and he was sad at times. But he also felt relief from the constant texting. "Sometimes it's teenager drama, people gossiping," he explained. "I felt less stressed because I didn't have to be involved."

Instead of texting, Kenny went to the gym and caught up on schoolwork. The first night, he told us, "I slept for 18 hours!" He also spent time sitting with his family and talking. Kenny's mom helped him with homework for the first time in two years. Said Kenny, "I felt closer to my parents."

Francesca had an even happier result when she put away her phone. "I loved it!" she said. "I was going to the gym and hanging out with friends and playing basketball. I had a wonderful experience." She slept better too.

Francesca decided to continue the experiment for a while. "I think I'll be so much smarter and healthier," she explained. "Everybody in the world should try it."

Kenny doesn't plan to give up his phone again. But he now knows that he *can* live without it. Said the teen, "It was a reality check."

—Sarah Jane Brian

Signs of Addiction

Many teens report troubling problems when they try going without phones and technology. One recent study asked students to give up phones and electronic media for 24 hours. The result? One in five people experienced changes in their bodies or emotions that are signs of possible **addiction**. Look below for some of these warning signs.

