

Son won't turn off his video game? Daughter obsessed with "likes" on Instagram?



It may not be entirely their fault. A [poll conducted for Common Sense Media](#), a nonprofit explores families and technology addiction. The ingredients in social media, video games, apps, and other digital products are carefully engineered to keep you coming back for more. Some computer scientists are revealing their secrets for keeping us hooked. Resisting the urge to check your phone or shut down Netflix after another cliffhanger *Stranger Things* episode should be a simple matter of self-control. But according to so-called whistleblowers such as Tristan Harris, a computer scientist who founded the [Time Well Spent](#) movement says we humans are totally overpowered.

Features such as app notifications, autoplay -- even "likes" and messages that self-destruct -- are scientifically proven to compel us to watch/check in/respond right now or feel that we're [missing something really important](#)

What parents need to know about technology addiction: Many of the techniques they use are ones outlined by experts in human behavior, Stanford University's Persuasive Technology Lab. Harris argues that these methods "hijack" our own good judgment. Most teens care deeply about peer validation. So it makes sense that friends' feedback on social media -- both the positive and the negative -- would tug at you until you satisfy your curiosity. You have a phone in your pocket, so why not check now? And now?



[Half of teens think they're addicted to their smartphones](#)

What do the big tech companies say to the criticism that they're designing addictive products? They typically give [the business argument](#), that they're creating products people love to use and are constantly trying to improve people's experience ([Facebook says](#) it polls users daily to gauge success).

But soon it may be hard for the tech giants to say that they're blameless. [More and more industry insiders](#) -- including some who designed these attention-claiming features -- are coming forward to cry foul on digital manipulation and even to suggest ways companies can limit it.

In fact, it's not just people who are going public. In 2017, [a leaked Facebook internal memo](#) showed how the social network can identify when teens feel "insecure," "worthless," and "need a confidence boost." That's not a problem "likes" can fix.

Remember: The other side wants to reduce the time between your thoughts and actions. Putting that pause in will help you resist your urges.

Autoplay is the feature that makes videos continue to stream even after they're over. Tristan Harris calls this the "bottomless bowl" phenomenon. With a refilling bowl, people eat [73 percent more calories](#). Or they binge-watch way too many movies.

What to do. Autoplay is typically on by default, so you have to turn it off. The feature can usually be found in the app's account Settings.



[Driving While Distracted: Why can't we ignore the pings?](#)

Notifications. Push notifications -- those little pings and prods you get to check your apps -- are habit-forming. They align an [external trigger \(the ping\) with an internal trigger](#) (a feeling of boredom, uncertainty, insecurity, etc.). Every app who uses them have discovered that when notifications tells us to do something, such as "Watch Sally's new video!" or "See who liked your post!" we respond immediately. These calls to action not only interrupt us, they cause stress.

What to do. Turn them off. Most devices have a Settings section where you can turn off notifications. You should also be able to turn off notifications in the app's settings.

Snapchat's Snapstreaks. A Snapstreak begins after two users send snaps (pictures) to each other for three days straight, but it's more likely due to a psychological theory called the [rule of reciprocity](#). Humans have a need to respond to a positive action with another positive action. Voilà, a Snapstreak is born. Companies exploit the rule of reciprocity because more data points for them means more opportunities to understand their users and try to sell them stuff.



[How to cut your kids' cell phone addiction](#)

What to do. Help kids understand how companies like Snapchat are using their (positive) desire to be nice to their friends to get them to use their product more.

Randomness. If you knew that Instagram updated your feed at precisely 3 p.m. every day, that's when you'd check in, right? But that won't keep you glued to your phone. Instead, social media companies use what's called "variable rewards." This technique [keeps us searching endlessly for our "prize,"](#) such as who friended us, who liked our posts, and who updated their status. (Not coincidentally, it's also the method

slot machines use to keep people pulling the lever.) Since you never know what's going to come up, you keep coming back for more.

What to do. Turn off app notifications Schedule a timer to go off at a certain time every day and check your feeds then.

In-app purchases. Free games such as Clash of Clans and Candy Crush lure you in by promising cheap thrills, then offering in-app purchases that let you level up, buy currency to use in the game, and more. But the real sneaky stuff is [how companies keep you playing -- and buying](#).

What to do. Spring for the full, paid version of games. They're cheaper -- and safer -- in the long run.

For the complete article go to http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/09/health/science-of-tech-obsession-partner/index.html?inf_contact_key=dfe988ba324fa3684384a3f97e84e56b02963751b117f4f30614286c72982d22