

*In-app-ropriate*

# Why I gave up phubbing



**RELATIONSHIPS**  
With Joanne Wilson

**N**OT fibbing or blubbing. I'm talking phubbing. This is a behaviour, I've sadly discovered, I was guilty of and I'm guessing you could well be too.

Technology advancing at lightning speed and its great impact on the way we do things is nothing new. I personally can't wait to download the latest app for fear of missing out. Last week it was for sleep monitoring and this week it's a new funky navigational one. Social media networks have become the main channels of communication for so many of us. You've been living in Paradise Caves (that's a real place on the Sunshine Coast), if you haven't heard of or used Facebook, Messenger, SnapChat, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, WhatsApp and Tinder.

This is where your internal friction lies. Regularly prioritise that phone that tells you the weather, how to cook, which road to take to the Noosa Billy Cart Grand Prix this month, and the footy scores; over the love for your partner, results in "phubbing". Phone plus snubbing.

I'm the first one to admit to being amused or mesmerised for too long by a certain hand-held device portraying enviable, captivating pictures, data or ideas – while my own family was seeking my attention. I'd often phubbed them and am ashamed. This shocking behavioural phenomenon is a also a real word and a "thing". This dreadful "technofence" means those most important to me could be in deficit of the emotional attentiveness they deserve.

I checked out the most recent Relationships Australia Indicator Survey on the topic of internet and relationships who cite the concerning and significant proportion (about 50%) of both men and women who indicated that there had been a



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

negative effect on their relationship due to a current or former partner spending too much time on the internet instead of with them or their family. Sad.

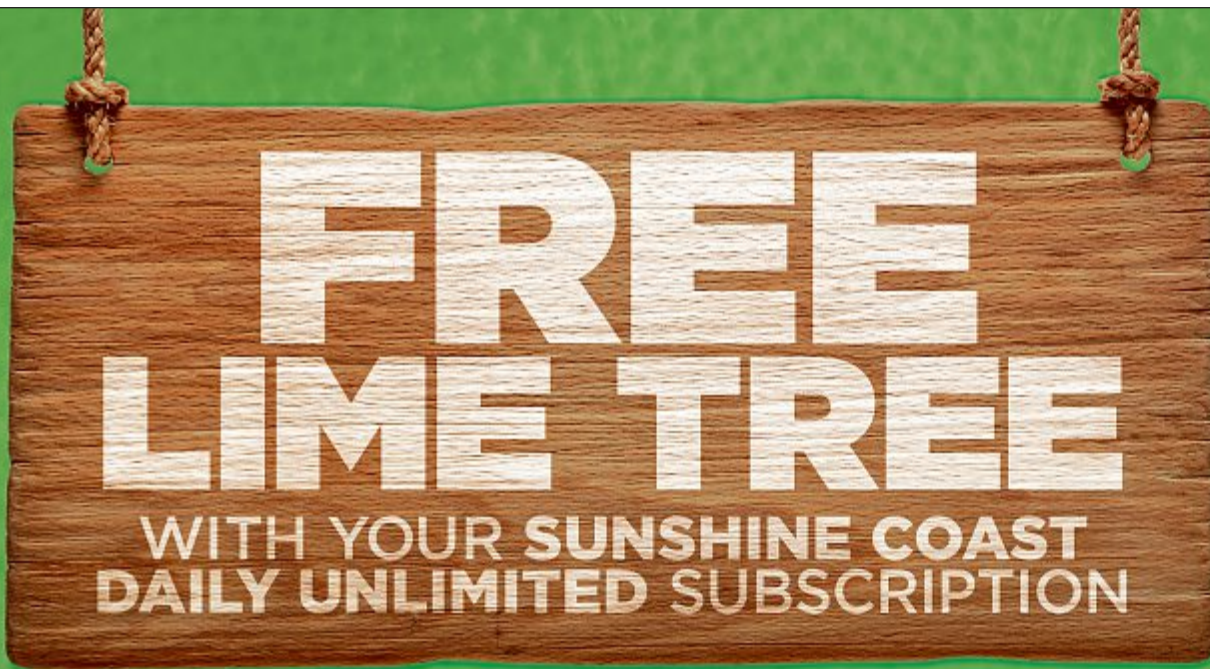
Marriages and children flourish when they are not constantly receiving the message that your phone is more interesting than them. The happiest head start to your child's life is a secure "attachment". That is, they need to know they can count on you when they need it, you love them and you need them. It also means, joining them in their "bids" for your attention. The frequency of such requests as, "Watch me balance this fidget spinner on my nose, Dad" can be annoying, however from what I

hear from the wise elderly, they'll be grown up and gone way too soon.

My relationship therapy often incorporates couples creating their own customised rules to prevent social media infiltrating their relationships and use it to enhance their connection. The first step is awareness, so be proactive and discuss any concerns with your partner. Here are some ideas that I've collaborated with couples and found effective:

- Redirect work phone calls to a colleague or subordinate on specified days or evenings.
  - Prohibit screen time past 8pm (put them in a technology box at the door).
  - Delete the offending "app" from your smart phone for a set period of time to disrupt unhealthy patterns. Replace it with one that encourages a new activity together such as fitness goals.
  - Incorporate the use of technology for private romantic gestures or methods for gratitude. Share your latest "app" find with your partner so they're always included.
  - Mention your partner in some of your online "posts" so they know you're proud of them. If you're in a relationship, why would your online world reflect anything different?
  - Buy an old style alarm clock and keep phones out of the bedroom.
  - Plan device-free outings. Imagine that. You'll have to remember it as you won't even be able to take a photo.
  - If you have small children, model behaviour and respect for others you would hope they will reflect – especially when they are teenagers.
- As much as social media is an effective tool in connecting relationships, it can also lead to their demise. Be still, be present, and you give and get the gift of NOW. You too can stop phubbing.

Joanne is the Founder of TheConfidante Counselling. Visit [www.sunshinecoastcounselling.com](http://www.sunshinecoastcounselling.com) for enquires.



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