

Making Smart Use of the Smartphone

A Classroom Activity Focusing on Self-Reflection and Priorities Management.

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Introduction

Do you have a good relationship with your students? A relationship with a sense of walking together toward a common goal? A relationship where they see you as an example of professionalism, diligence, sensitivity, and thinking outside the box? A relationship where you succeed, through the lessons you give, to be a little part of their life, to intrigue them, and to open a window for them to things that are not in the official curriculum? A relationship where they trust in you, trust that you want the best for them?

These questions, which concern me as a teacher, gave rise to the idea of "the simplest assignment," whose main goals are:

- Raising awareness of using cellphones as our default choice.
- Invitation to a class discussion on the topic and rethinking patterns common to many of us.
- Promoting students' independence and self-confidence by encouraging curiosity, patience, empathy, activism, giving, and expressing gratitude (the change begins with a small step, contemplation as a lead-in to observation, boredom as an incentive for creative thinking, initiated action as an opening to satisfaction and growth).

The simplest assignment

The stages of the assignment, as they were presented in my class:

1. Download to your smartphone the image from the following link: [Image](#)
2. Select the picture as the "Main screen" and "Lock screen" images on your smartphone.
3. Leave the image as a background for a week.
4. Every time you open your smartphone, try to notice the motive that brought you to use it. Is this motive described in one of the words highlighted in yellow on the screen?
If the answer is "yes," ask yourself: Is there anything else that can make me or someone else important to me happy?
5. In a week, we will devote a lesson to discussing the thoughts and feelings that surfaced.

Student comments

I am aware of how sensitive this issue is, I am happy for every student who chooses to take part, and of course, I respect those who do not. I hope that the very fact that some of the students are participating as well as the class discussion on the subject will give everyone some food for thought.

Following are the comments of those students who chose to participate:

- These words, which appeared on my screen every time, I felt they were "judging" me!
- I feel like I'm involved with the person who is speaking to me, but the minute a new message arrives...
- I found myself in the classroom, and next to me "girls' talk" ... well, what could I do already?!
- Suddenly I noticed that it was not just me. During recess and everything, I am in the middle of some awesome story. Suddenly, the person I'm talking to gets a message from WhatsApp and he goes to check it... Maybe my story is not so awesome? Maybe I'm boring?
- I didn't have the energy to study for chemistry, so I just spent the whole weekend on my smartphone.
- There were a few times during the week when I opened the cellphone, the picture appeared in front of me, I managed to stop for a moment, to hesitate, and turn it off. I actually felt relief.
- I couldn't believe how much this thing "jumps into my hand" whenever there's a space I'm trying to fill.
- 99% of the times I went and opened the cellphone, it was just out of boredom! (Said with a big smile)
- I used it mostly to talk to parents and friends, or to read messages on the WhatsApp group of my cinema program.
- A family discussion broke out in our living room, I did not want to take part in it, so I opened the first video that came up on YouTube, and I said: "I can't hear ..." and I went to my room (the technique known as "disappearing into the cellphone").
- A feeling of relief, no pressure from the cellphone, peace of mind.
- I know that I have strong willpower, for example: in combat fitness training or in studying for a test. But in front of the cellphone – it's as if my willpower is canceled out.
- I decided to take it as a "way of life" - now, even when I go to turn on the TV, I ask myself: Is it out of boredom?

- Mostly, I ignored the image on the screen completely. Sometimes I did stop for a moment, and looked for something else to do. For example: I played with my little sister.
- In meetings with friends, we usually drift into our cellphones. Some of the times I managed not to get carried away, my friends noticed it and they also put down their cell phones. A conversation developed among us.
- Instead of "thinking" about doing a workout, I decided to just go out and buy weights and do a workout every morning.
- Every time I felt lonely, I opened my cellphone ... No one wants to feel lonely ... And the feeling of loneliness really disappeared!

Another step

After raising awareness and holding a class discussion, you can take the idea a step further in a practical direction, and invite the students to make a list for themselves of "Things That I Plan To Do Soon, For Myself and For Others" - sports activity, a visit to the grandparents, writing a decorated birthday greeting, planning a social encounter, looking at the sky and contemplating, make cookies with my little brother, studying for a test, checking how many phone numbers I remember by heart, watching a movie with friends, calling to say thanks (if I forgot), helping parents, strolling around with a friend, organizing my clothes closet - finally, drawing, listening to music / to birds singing, playing an instrument, thinking about something I'd like to hang in the classroom to share with the rest of the students, watching a YouTube video related to the study material, remembering something that I heard during recess and devoting some thought to it, inventing an interesting slogan or logo for the WhatsApp / class / youth group, helping a classmate who is having difficulties with schoolwork, make a list of dreams that I would like to fulfill, etc.

This list will be a sort of "activity bank" that students can consult, once they recognize the "default" situation mentioned above.

Link to a summary card, that can be handed out to students: [Card](#)

With love and wishes for success,

Gil