



ONE MINUTE SERIES #9

Dear First Responder, Medical & Mental Health Professional,

A lot of people find their daily routine to be exhausting, juggling work with family matters, social obligations, and various chores. It may feel like we are **always running from task to task**, living in a society that is constantly making demands on our time and attention with **no respite**.

It may not always be possible to travel and get away from work. Nevertheless, there are numerous ways to **reduce stress** from the tiring marathon of life. We can start by changing the way that we interact with our phones. More than ever, **our phones play a central role in our day**.

Most **people are unaware of just how much time they spend** on their phones and the effect that this has on their well-being. Some studies tell us that people check their phones as much as 150 times a day. Take "Joe" for example: An app installed on his Android phone called "Antisocial" reports that Joe **unlocks his phone on average 100 times per day**. Over the last 30 days he has spent 86 hours on social media, 6 hours on Gmail, and 5 hours on the news. While some of the time spent on Joe's phone is work related and unavoidable, Joe reports there is also a significant amount of time spent on what Joe calls **"mindless stimulation"**.

Entertainment and social media may have various psychological or social benefits for the user. Nevertheless, for people experiencing stress from relentless work & family obligations they may find it is **more beneficial to routinely put down their phones** and take a walk around the block, socialize with a peer, or meditate.

This is because our phones enable us to **endlessly stimulate ourselves** and evade getting the rest our minds need. When we feel overtaxed and overwhelmed it may help us most to "do nothing" for a few minutes, taking time out to **simply be with ourselves**. While entertainment has its place, it is not the same thing as resting the mind with **less stimulating forms of self-care**.

Another example of a small way to **slow down life's onerous pace** is to wait five rings before answering the phone, or to notice five breaths going in and out before checking an incoming message. By being **constantly vigilant** for incoming calls, messages, replies, and other stimulating media, we **expend a lot of wasted energy** on this endeavor & **condition ourselves to be reactive** to our phones. Much more can be said about this topic and it is deserving of further exploration.

To summarize, we can start improving our self-care practices today by studying how much time we spend on our phones, noticing the **reactive relationship** we have to incoming messages and media, and to commit ourselves to adopting techniques or "hacks" to **slow down the pace**. Instead of **reacting** to our phones and letting it dictate our behavior, we can learn how to be a master over our phones and our response to stimuli. This will enable us to **"purchase" more calmness** and attention in our lives to whatever matters most, and to **slow down life's rapid pace** to one that is more manageable.