

1.

#AddictiveDesign

# Designed to be addictive?



We spend **more time** in front of our **screens** than we intend to. One key reason? The **design**.

**Addictive design** is intentionally crafted to capture our **attention**, encourage **interaction**, and keep us online **as long as possible**.



ADS

**The goal?** To show us as many ads as possible.

But what's behind it? ?

+ 5 tips



Mechanisms such as **infinite scrolling**, **autoplay**, and **notifications** play a key role. They not only **influence** our behavior but also **make impulse control harder**.

2.

## Over time, reaching for the smartphone becomes a reflex.

Simple **time limits** or **blocking apps** can only interrupt this habit temporarily while the **impulse remains**.



**Going “cold turkey”** can even **backfire**, intensifying cravings because the impulse isn’t consciously regulated—only suppressed.

So, how much control do we really have ?

# 3. Victims of digital asymmetry

Platforms are **testing new features** directly **on users** and optimize them based on our reactions—often **without our knowledge nor our consent**.



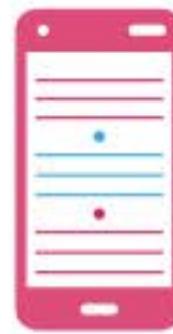
They rarely explain how these features affect us. Also, they **don't inform** us about alternative settings or **intentionally** make them **difficult to access**.



**More control** through **conscious choices**.

# 4.

## Chronological feed instead of algorithms



We **engage longer** and more intensely with **emotionally charged content**—whether positive or negative.

**Algorithms** precisely analyze **our reactions** and feed us content that constantly **stimulates our brain** and keeps us glued to the screen.



**Choose to see posts in the order they were published.** This way, you...

know **when to stop scrolling** because you recognize what's new and what you've **already seen**,

can **find interesting posts again**, even after refreshing the page,

**decide for yourself** what's relevant, as all posts are displayed.

**i**  
The DSA **requires** very large platforms to provide an **alternative to the algorithmic feed**, and as a result, the **chronological feed** is often **available** again.

# 5.

## Group notifications



We **instinctively** react to **sudden stimuli** because of our survival instinct.

**Notifications exploit this:** sounds, vibrations, or screen flashes stimulate **multiple senses** at once.



**Avoid constant distractions** by:

**receiving notifications** in **scheduled summaries** instead of being notified continuously

**hiding the notification content** (e.g., no banner or preview, only a badge count).

**restricting notifications** to specific apps or contacts.

# 6. Reduce visual triggers.



Our **brain** releases **dopamine** when we receive a message or see a video **we like**.



Over time, **we associate visual cues**—such as notifications or app icons—**with this positive experience**. As a **result**, our **brain reacts** to these signals **before we even open** the content.



## Avoid these triggers by:



Add a **button** to your home screen **to quickly toggle** this function (e.g., for taking a photo) without having to constantly access the settings.

**activating grayscale mode:** Colors lose their signaling effect, which often drives impulsive actions (e.g. red = danger → urgency).

**removing distracting apps** from the home screen or placing them in a separate folder.

# 7. Change habits and share them



We encourage each other to stay online. Social needs, **curiosity**, or the **fear of missing out** push us to **always be available** and to **respond immediately**.

Blue checkmarks, online status, and typing indicators **add pressure**.



**Inform your contacts about your new habits.** This provides:

**stronger commitment**  
that helps you stick to  
your goals.

**motivation** through shared  
rules or challenges.

**distractions and social interactions** you'd  
otherwise seek online.

**the opportunity** to replace  
negative habits with new,  
shared activities.

# 8. Decide consciously instead of consuming passively



Default settings, **autoplay**, **infinite scrolling**, **hidden navigation** elements, and **missing time indicators** make it harder to regulate our consumption. The **result? Passive consumption** and binge-watching.



## Take back control by:

**reflecting on why** you're on your phone (boredom, frustration, distraction?).

**setting clear intentions:** What exactly are you looking for or planning to do?

**choosing what you consume** (e.g., through personal watchlists, notes, or bookmarks).

**consciously spending** your time with activities that inspire or relax you.

# 9. What is fair design?



**At its core, user well-being comes first.** Fair design:

**creates transparency** about psychological mechanisms in digital applications, the goals behind them, and how user data is handled.



**avoids addictive mechanisms** and supports conscious use through time limits, reminders for breaks, and offline activities.

**tests new features for potential risks**—especially for children and adolescents—before launching them and adjusts them if necessary.



**provides in-app educational measures** that address risks and promote self-control and healthy digital habits.