

# THROW AWAY YOUR SMARTPHONE NOW!

(and get a different, less capable, less addictive smartphone)

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I did that about a year ago (a bit more now) and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made for my own productivity and mental health! Last summer, one Saturday while I was working at camp, I had my phone attached to my hip by a carabiner while I was out thrift shopping with my counselor buddies. Now, this seemed like such an intelligent and innovative idea, having my cell phone dangle from my belt loop. I could keep it on me without holding it, and just swing it up to glance at it whenever I felt like it. Marvelous. Right? WRONG! I swiftly smashed it in a car door as we were leaving the thrift store! Completely dysfunctional, just like that! What a tragedy.

Regardless, I still had a week left working at camp, so I had to do it without a cell phone. I asked my sister and fellow counselor to tell our parents my phone broke ... but she was feeling defiant or something (?) and decided consciously to neglect this request whenever it was made. So they were, of course, very upset with me upon my return home for my lack of communication. Good for nothing evil twin. Anyway, I found that over my last week in the wilderness, I was enjoying more and more the state of not having a smartphone in my pocket. Or in my backpack. Or anywhere. In fact, I started to dread the fact that I would have to return home and get a new one. BING! (That's the idea light bulb appearing over my head in a cartoonish fashion). Perhaps ... I should not get a new one.

So, upon my return, I did plenty of research on various dumbphones to try and figure out what viable options there were to replace my broken dopamine machine. I needed something that could make calls, send text messages, and do little else. I began to think a flip phone would be neat to carry around, but then I hit a major roadblock. Most traditional flip phones on the market today only support 2G cellular data, which my carrier has discontinued in the entire continental United States. That's a bit of an issue for me when my entire goal is to send calls and texts! Eventually, I did find a phone that I felt would suit my needs ... The CAT S22 Flip. (Yes, that's CAT as in Caterpillar, the industrial machine company). Marketed as a rugged flip phone for seniors and construction workers, this device is built like a brick, it supports 4G cell data, it's got big ass buttons as well as a touch screen, and ... it runs Android 11. Eurgh, yes, it is a smartphone. However! It's, like, the perfect kind of smartphone for people who hate smartphones! You see, it has such a small screen and such little RAM that [what are in my opinion] the worst functions of typical, modern smartphones don't work at all on this device. Meaning, you really can't use social media or any frivolous time wasters of the sort, but you *can* do all of the things you *need* that are only really possible with a smartphone,

even if the UI is a bit unwieldy at times. You could use ride share apps like Uber and Lyft, navigation apps, bank apps and digital wallets, I needed to download an app for my university now that I'm enrolled in college, and I've even got Spotify on this thing. I use Spotify all the time<sup>1</sup>. None of these services work perfectly on my little half-smart, half-dumb Caterpillar phone, but they work well enough, and I'm glad to have a device with these capabilities, as there aren't really any other options for [most of] these services on the go using other devices. It's a capable enough machine that after a year of use I feel confident moving out and going to college with the S22 as my only phone, but also incapable enough that I feel like my phone is just a phone. It's perfect!

I'd like to touch on how this technological transition has improved my daily life. It almost seems silly to say that changing my cell phone improved my life, but this is something that I use every day. Even if I strive to be more offline and less dependent on my deVices, they still have a prominent role in my life and how I spend it. I've noticed that, in general, I spend my time in much more satisfactory ways now that I no longer use a traditional smart phone. I was for many years a slave to the "bed rotting" way of life. I've never had many friends or much motivation in my life. Until recently, I never really had goals or objectives. I grew up in a town that hates me and, quite frankly, I was always a bit of a hermit. Never really had much to do. As a logical extension of this, for most of high school I would come home and do nothing. Having an instant dopamine machine in my pocket, I would often (well, almost always) end up scrolling through The Apps in my bed for *hours*. Horrible! It's horrible! I always noticed myself doing it and I always hated it! I cannot deny that I had and still have a terrible screen addiction. It makes me feel sick thinking about it, spending so many hours, days, weeks in my fucking bed, watching short form fucking slop videos! It's terrifying! I was like a fucking zombie! I suspect that some sort of depression also has something to do with this phenomenon – I do believe or perhaps hope that I've always had some psychological issues – but really I'm not sure. Anyway, Smashing my smartphone in a car door and replacing it with a flip phone stopped this habit instantaneously! It manifests in other ways now; god knows I was still addicted to Twitter before I deactivated, and I certainly still waste far too much time on my computer most days, but I'm very glad to say that my bed is just for sleeping now. It feels good. And I've been more productive over the past year than ever before! I made so much more artwork (many pieces of which, almost all the *good* stuff, I've been stalling on uploading to my site, eek!), I spent more time with my home town friends, I actually *read books* (big one for me), I locked the fuck in to my college application process and I haggled for some really good scholarships, I went to more shows ... I don't know, I just feel like my senior year of high school was more active and more real than the years of my life that preceded it. I also felt so much more present. I never realized before how much people check their phones all the time. Now that I don't, I feel like I'm much more mindful and aware in everything I do. It just feels like my time is much better spent. Also, it makes me feel unique and cool, LOL. I also like that I've fallen completely out of the loop on influencers and trends.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, yes, I know Spotify is a shitty company. I've been on a family plan for years and I'm too lazy to migrate my music to (and pay for) anything else. You may throw digital stones at me for this transgression.

Something interesting about using this phone is that it's forced me to replace other smartphone functions with different devices. I almost never took pictures when I used a smartphone, but once I got a flip phone with a 2 megapixel camera I found that I needed to use a digital camera when I *needed* to take pictures of things like notes. I found that I really enjoyed taking pictures with a digital camera and I've made a hobby of it over the past year. I do almost all of my internet searches, emails, news reading, etc. from my laptop now. I take physical notes with a pen and paper. If I want to record audio or video, I have to use an audio recorder or my digital camera. I love this. I love that I don't have everything in the same rectangular prism anymore. I feel more connected to and mindful about the things that I do and the things that I carry with me.

Might I also add that there have been absolutely zero negative consequences of making the switch.

Finally, I'd like to offer a review of the phone after over a full year of use. I really like this phone. Obviously. It allows me to do everything I need a phone to do and nothing else, which is really nice! Even having 4G data instead of 5G, I haven't had any issues with communication. My entire family uses Whatsapp for our group chats and texting, and I'm pleased to report it works flawlessly on this device, which is important to me. I'm able to use bank apps, transfer money, and I can access the internet and navigation services in a pinch. The phone itself is well-constructed. It has a very strong hinge (which provides a satisfying snap upon closing the phone!) and large buttons, with a thick and strong build. This thing looks like a brick and it definitely has some weight to it. It's water resistant and it has an insane drop radius. It is so fucking durable. I've made a bit out of just chucking it against concrete and asphalt because it's funny and nothing happens to it. After a year of doing that the only damage is a couple lines of dead pixels on the outer screen, which appeared very recently and definitely by my own fault (immediately after whipping it against the sidewalk). I could definitely close this in a car door and it would be fine. Can't say the same for my old smartphone. The only issue I've experienced with this phone is that it messes up notifications on the outer screen for text messages in group chats. It just shows the name (or number) of the last person that sent me a private message, regardless of if they're in the group chat. This can be a bit annoying, but it's not a big deal for me, and I've never had an issue with incorrect caller ID which is much more important in my opinion. That's the only problem I've had with it. I absolutely love using the CAT S22 Flip as my only cell phone and I plan to continue using it until T-Mobile discontinues 4G.

If you hate smartphones, if you're thinking about "de-poning", or if you just want to try something new after your current phone kicks it, I would highly recommend the CAT S22 or really any other comparable cell phone. You can get it for \$60 brand new or \$25 refurbished, so if you hate it it's really not a huge loss compared to other cell phones. I got mine new, but after a year of abusing it I'm confident that you will receive almost an identical product if you purchase it refurbished. It's worth thinking about, at the very least.

TLDR I love my phone guys. And I think many lives could be improved by ditching the traditional smartphone.