

Three Iphone Features that Can Increase Your Well-Being

Whether you are a parent, or simply a person critically thinking about how your extended arm (yes, I mean your phone) may possibly be good for your well-being, I will provide you with 3 reasons for why your Iphone is not purely evil, but actually has some functions that can foster well-being. There are many ways to increase happiness as science shows, and some of those are actually implemented by technology. With the release of the Iphone 7 last year and the new IOS10, Apple invested in a couple of valuable new tools that can be used to foster happiness. Now, these tools are in addition to Apples CareKit that came with the Iphone already for a couple of years now. The CareKit includes things like step counting or the tracking of vitals. It can even integrate with data from your health care provider, which is pretty cool given the importance of patient health control. Whereas [physical health](#) is one important aspect of well-being, I cover three other mechanism, that are particularly related to your mental and emotional well-being.

Here are 3 ways the iPhone7 can contribute to your well-being:



1. Fostering Healthy Sleep

It is no surprise that **Apple** is at the forefront when it comes to caring about its' consumers well-being. In 2014 it first introduced the Health App which tracks steps and activity levels of any sorts. With the I phone 7, the Health app not only tracks your activity levels but also focuses on nutrition, sleep and even mindfulness, all the while suggesting a variety of apps that help you track and train these aspects of your health. Pretty cool.

That sleep is one of the most undervalued aspects of our physical and psychological well-being is something that **Arianna Huffington** has spoken out about very prominently in 2016, with her new book release "The Sleep Revolution." "*Sleep your way to the top*" is her motto of being successful (noooo not what you think....where is your mind today?... this is actually meant literally here!) and **science** supports her proposition. Sleep helps us learn, decompress, calm the nervous system, avoid depression and weight gain, just to name a few.

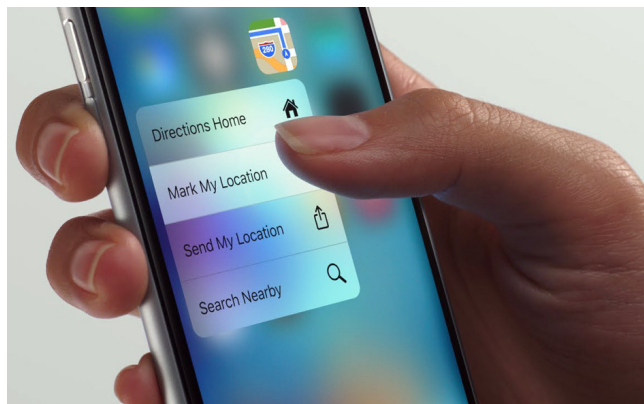
But if we don't make sure to shut off the screen before going to bed and knowing when to go to bed to get the recommended 8h of sleep a night, we doom ourselves for poor sleep quality.

It seems that Apple believes and invests a lot in this science, because besides the Health app's option to track your sleep, your clock app now has an additional option called "Bedtime" that helps you set reminders for when to go to bed if you want to get a certain amount of hours in before waking up. What a cool way to help us control our Netflix binge watching nights and help us set priorities. And yes, **sleep**, as unpretentious as it seems, **should be among the top 5 of our priorities for a healthy life**. The **Sleep Judge Blog** provides more tips for how to manage your technology use at night to ensure a good night of sleep.

2. Simplifying Messaging

In addition, the Iphone7 (and iOS 10) simplifies the process of reading and responding to messages by simply tapping onto the message on the lock screen (a light haptic buzz can be felt through the 3D touch screen), which opens the options to reply or view the message in the app. This cut's down on amounts of clicks we have to do to access the message and simplifies the process of message responding. Similar shortcuts have been implemented for almost all other mainstream I phone Apps including google maps, weather, clock, Facebook or Safari.

Simplifying processes like that frees space on our cognitive hardware for more important tasks. Really almost everything we do nowadays, takes away from our limited cognitive resources. We underestimate the amount of energy our technologies take away from us because we engage with them constantly and we regard responding to a message as a “side” activity. But reading and crafting even a short text message takes away from our cognitive energy that is limited. Thus making this activity as less energy consuming as possible contributes to our well-being through conserving our energy. Well done, Apple.



3. Fostering Social Connections

Another new feature that the new iOS 10 provides is a bunch of new ways for **sending iMessages**. Particularly relevant for our happiness is how closely **connected we feel with others**. The new Iphone/iOS may indeed foster this aspect of our well-being. Now you can acknowledge messages with stickers such as thumbs up or down, exclamation points or question marks, or whatever fun stickers you additionally download, instead of sending a completely new message (again, simplifying the communication here too).

This also helps make the communication less prone to misunderstandings. How often have we been in a situation where we don't know what part of our message our respondent responded too. This can now be avoided by directly acknowledging a previously sent message with a sticker of an A-ok sign or exclamation point.

In addition, you can now handwrite a message, send a real time kiss or heart, or photo with your writing on it (i.e., Digital Touch), and send messages with special effects (kind of like in a power point you can make text appear in a bouncy way or swirling around). Pretty trippy. All of those features allow for a more synchronous and personalized way to communicate, which is important in this DNage in which online communication is the primary form of communication.

As mentioned, **social relationships** are one of the most important aspects for our well-being. Creating an environment that fosters more heartfelt communication and providing opportunities for showing love to each other and making the respondent laugh (even though only online) is a good way to strengthen social relationships. Features like the new IMessaging tools can help to express sympathy and affection in a more playful way than simple emoticons do. It would be interesting to see some research around that. But I am sure Apple is on that already.



To sum it up...

Whereas these new features certainly won't change the decline in empathy we observe in digital natives, nor will it substitute the benefits of unplugging, conscious technology usage, or hanging out face to face. But, these new features are a step in the right direction of technology companies taking a stake at rewiring our happiness.

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