





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: ADAM ALTER, Ph.D.

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Wednesday, March 15, 2017, Irresistible: Designing for Behavioral Addiction, 7:00 PM, North Shore Country Day School Auditorium, 310 Green Bay Rd., Winnetka, IL 60093. Facebook has 1.5 billion users; Instagram users upload sixty million new photos every day. Twenty million people count and monitor every step with Fitbit. Two-thirds of all adults suffer from sleep deprivation, 95% use an electronic device that emits light in the hour before bed, and 60% of adults (ages 18-64) keep their phones next to them while they sleep. Some of the world's greatest technocrats have the strictest limits on technology for their children. In 2010, when Steve Jobs, a low-tech parent, was asked if his kids loved the iPad, he replied, "They haven't used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home." He knew the lure of his beautiful, tactile, absorbing, brilliant invention.

Technology designers are extremely skilled at creating interactive environments for consumers. The colors, fonts, and sounds are tested and polished and refined countless times, and the feel of the product, what it's like in your hand or on your body, is key. Technology is intentionally designed to deeply engage its user. Is it any wonder that our attention span is evaporating?

Adam Alter, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Marketing at New York University's Stern School of Business, with a cross-appointment in the Department of Psychology, has been researching how interactive technologies can negatively impact humans. As he writes in his new book, Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked, "The environment and circumstance of the digital age are far more conducive to addiction than anything humans have experienced in our history." Neuroscience research reveals that substance addictions and behavioral addictions activate the same brain regions, and they're fueled by some of the same basic human needs: social engagement and social support, mental stimulation, and a sense of effectiveness.

If we are challenged today with "irresistible" smartphones and tablets, what will the future – the near future – hold once immersive technology goes mainstream and we all own virtual reality devices? A commitment to nurturing a culture that preferences the social bonds of face-to-face interaction, a culture that harnesses its technology rather than submits to it, requires a woke citizenry that values, with its spending, the careful, compassionate engineering of its technological devices.

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