

Gifts for a joyful holiday

By T. Lee Brown
Correspondent

Before screens, we had books. A good book can feel impossible to put down. Yet unlike our phones, books were not engineered to addict their users.

The following books explore our brains and technology. Try walking into a brick-and-mortar bookstore to find your copy. This supports local businesses that employ real-life people in your community. Unlike the robots in Amazon’s warehouses, you can chat with these folks and learn something new.

“Bored and Brilliant: How Spacing Out Can Unlock Your Most Productive and Creative Self” by Manoush Zomorodi (St. Martin’s Press). This one’s genuinely fun! Popular podcaster Manoush challenged her listeners to experiment with changing their phone habits. She was surprised when thousands of people signed up. Bored and Brilliant combines the real-life stories of her listeners with cutting-edge research about how our brains work, and what technology is doing to them. The book is appropriate for teenagers on up, and isn’t anti-technology. It’s more a fascinating exploration of our culture, our apps, and our minds.

“How to Break Up with Your Phone” by Catherine Price (Random House). Don’t let the title fool you. Founder of the JOMO Project, Price is not out to eliminate technology but to help readers take control. Hoping to balance your phone and device use to make your real life happier? This slender volume gets right to the point. Practical, not preachy, Price presents information and techniques in a simple, nonjudgmental way.

“Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media

Accounts Right Now” by Jaron Lanier (Henry Holt). Need a present for the dashing but nerdy over-thinker in your life? The one who keeps up with cultural trends and makes interesting connections between a variety of subjects? Here you go. Even if they don’t personally use social media, your big thinker may get a big kick out of Ten Arguments. Author Jaron Lanier is an old-school virtual reality pioneer, an influential thought leader in Silicon Valley since the 1980s. He’s not always right, but he’s always smart, entertaining, and thought-provoking. And he understands, from the inside out, how we’ve all been buffaloeed by Silicon Valley’s culture, political views, and ability to “highjack users’ brains.”

“Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy” by Siva Vaidhyanathan (Oxford University Press). This one’s neither fun nor simple. Bracing and rigorous, Antisocial Media is a

nation of the Facebook/Instagram/WhatsApp empire. Vaidhyanathan lays bare embarrassing fact after embarrassing fact. He tells the story of how Facebook clumsily evolved from a “hot-or-not” style app for rating the attractiveness of Harvard students into a global mind-control leviathan. I don’t know how Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg sleeps at night, knowing he inspired a book like this!

Paulina Springs Books in Sisters offers a 15 percent discount on these titles. Ask at checkout for details.



beautifully researched
c o n d e m -

JOMO: Putting down the devices leaves more room for connection

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of She Soars Psychiatry, Van Howeling works with patients around the state of Oregon.

Van Howeling takes a functional medicine approach to emotional and mental well-being, addressing root causes rather than relying primarily on pharmaceuticals.

“We are built to be social creatures,” she explained. “There are very real psychological and physiological benefits to looking each other in the eye, maybe a light touch — that’s a bonding experience.”

Disembodied socializing via devices is linked to anxiety, depression, and a soaring suicide rate, particularly among young people. Excessive social media, video games, and Internet pornography use affect thousands of people and their loved ones. “We’re more ‘connected’ but also more lonely than ever before,” said Van Howeling.

Catherine Price would likely agree. The author of “How to Break Up with Your Phone” and founder of the JOMO Project, Price believes it’s possible to use technology wisely.

“More and more people are realizing that the time

they spend on their phones doesn’t always make them feel good — and that staring at our screens is having negative effects on our brains and bodies,” Price recently told *The Nugget*.

She aims to help people “redefine their relationships with their devices so that they’re able to use them in ways that feel good or that are useful,” she said, “without getting sucked in for hours at a time.”

Breaking a heavy addiction may not be easy during the action-packed holiday season. Price and her readers plan to launch a New Year effort toward better digital device use. Look for helpful details in *The Nugget’s* special Focus on Health issues in January.

In the meantime, applying a few JOMO principles to everyday life can de-stress the holidays. Putting phones out of sight to charge and asking for a phone-free dinner table are two easy techniques. See “Cultivate Holiday Joy” in this issue for more suggestions.

The holiday season offers many opportunities for discovering meaning and connection in real life. Music concerts, church services, parties, community meals, volunteering opportunities, and craft fairs abound. There are many ways to enjoy missing out on the endless Facebook scroll.

Patriot Pen Award...

PHOTO PROVIDED

Sisters VFW Post 8138 presented the annual Patriot Pen Award for a public school student to Baylor James Dyer of Sisters Middle School for his essay on “Why I Honor The American Flag.” He was presented a letter of recognition and a check for \$200. His entry was selected from a field of 17.

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