

Name _____

Date _____

Reading Assessment

“Ringxiety” and How It Affects You

From the FoxNews.com article

1. In the seventh paragraph, the article mentions “feeling a phantom limb” and relates this to a limb that has been “amputated.” Which best describes an “amputated limb?”
 - a. A tree branch that was given a root stimulator
 - b. A superhero cleverly disguised as a limb
 - c. A part of the body that has been removed, such as an arm or leg
 - d. A limb that regrows after a period of time to replace a missing part
2. In the ninth paragraph, the article mentions that research in the area is “scant.” Which word best describes “scant?”
 - a. Insufficient
 - b. Diagonal
 - c. Well-documented
 - d. Developing
3. Also in the ninth paragraph, the article mentions how “theories abound about the phenomenon.” What is meant by “theories abound?”
 - a. People are developing new thoughts on the topic regularly
 - b. Theories on the topic bound from tall buildings and trains, like Superman
 - c. There are several different theories and new ones are created regularly
 - d. Everyone who has investigated the topic share the same beliefs
4. In the twelfth paragraph, the article mentions “certain circles.” What is being described by this phrase?
 - a. A particular clique of people who might share the same line of work
 - b. A set of points equidistant from a center point
 - c. The author was just looking for two words that started with “C.” “Particular parallelograms” didn’t have the same ring to it.
 - d. The circles refer to calling circles, where people call only a particular group of other people. The MyCircle idea has been commercialized by Alltel recently.
5. In the nineteenth paragraph, Jeff Posner refers to hearing a whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. What is he referring to?
 - a. The sound he hears when he receives a call from a particular coworker.
 - b. An inadvertent call he receives from a coworker whose phone mistakenly dials his phone.
 - c. The static that comes across on his phone for most of his calls because of cruddy service.
 - d. The sound his phone makes when it is in vibrate mode.
6. In the twenty-ninth paragraph, Don Katz describes “anticipatory vibrations.” What is he talking about?
 - a. He just wants to sound important.
 - b. The way he can “feel” that a new call or message is about to come in
 - c. The Northern Lights phenomenon seen near the Arctic Circle
 - d. It is a serious medical condition that he suffers from.

From the HowStuffWorks article:

7. The idea of the first paragraph is to:
 - a. Get the reader's attention by relating to an experience they may have had.
 - b. Insult the reader by assuming they are insane.
 - c. Give some sort of background information on the topic of the article.
 - d. Briefly outline what will be discussed during the remainder of the article.
8. In the second paragraph, the article mentions "techno-neuroses." What are neuroses?
 - a. A French flower that was developed in a laboratory setting.
 - b. Paranoid habits that cause people to always be on the lookout for something.
 - c. With the "compulsions" from the end of this paragraph, it can cause some serious health risks that should cause people to look seriously at their Blackberry use.
 - d. Small spasms that can result from a nervous habit or twitch.
9. Which phrase could *not* be used in a description of the phenomenon of ringxiety?
 - a. Annoyance
 - b. Hallucination
 - c. Phobia
 - d. Techno-neurose
10. In the fourth paragraph, the article mentions a constant state of readiness to receive a call. Which of the following could be possible side effects of this constant state of readiness?
 - a. Higher blood pressure
 - b. Inner ear infections
 - c. Paranoia and/or hallucinations
 - d. None of the above
11. Pick the best example of an auditory hallucination.
 - a. Starting to go through a stoplight because the turning lane's light changed.
 - b. Looking in the wrong direction when you hear a fire truck's sirens.
 - c. Mistaking the sound of another car alarm for the sound of your car alarm.
 - d. Turning around because you feel a tap on your shoulder just to find that you bumped into a mannequin. If you're my mother-in-law, you would apologize to the mannequin before walking away.
12. What relation exists between frequent ringxiety sufferers and their cell phone usage?
 - a. More cell phone usage, more occurrences of ringxiety.
 - b. More cell phone usage, the more certain they are that their phone is ringing.
 - c. Less cell phone usage, more occurrences of ringxiety.
 - d. Less cell phone usage, less worries that their phone is ringing.
13. In the eleventh paragraph, the article mentions that people who prefer to text rather than call tend to be more lonely and socially anxious. Explain whether you agree or disagree with this statement. Back up your belief with at least two complete sentences.
14. Briefly describe your own experiences with ringxiety or if you know of others who have had incidents of ringxiety. Write in complete sentences.



Main > Communication > Notifications

Do you suffer from "ringxiety"?

by Josh Clark

Do you suffer from "ringxiety"?

Your cell phone rings. You go to answer it, but there's no one there. Curiously, there's no missed call, either. You realize after a moment that you mistook a bird chirping for your cell phone's ring. What's weird is that this isn't the first time this has happened to you. You're probably not insane -- instead, you are suffering from what's come to be called **ringxiety**.

Cell Phone Image Gallery



Cesar Rangel/AFP/Getty Images

Our increasing reliance on personal technology has led to techno-neuroses like ringxiety and "crackberry" addiction. See more [cell phone images](#).

It's not surprising that in the increasingly wireless and connected world, humanity would begin to suffer techno-neuroses. Electronic gadgets have become a part of the everyday lives of people worldwide. Ringxiety is among the first of these new neuroses to emerge, along with internet addiction and the "crackberry" phenomenon -- a person's compulsive urge to use and check his BlackBerry wireless device. While crackberry addiction is a compulsive behavior, ringxiety may be a result of that and similar compulsions.

Ringxiety, first coined by psychologist David Laramie, is exactly what it sounds like: confusing the sound of a cell phone ringing with a sound similar to it. Since there's no harm done, aside from a bit of annoyance -- especially if a person struggles to locate his phone -- most people seem to regard ringxiety as a curiosity or a fact of wireless life. The exact origin of this hallucination has yet to be exactly pinned down, however.

Some researchers think that ringxiety stems from a constant state of readiness that could develop in cell phone users. Before the advent of wireless phones, no one expected a call while driving in the car, shopping at the grocery store or dancing at a nightclub. With cell phones, though, there's a potential for a call to come through at any moment. Because of this, it's possible that our brains are conditioned to expect a call constantly, and when a person hears a tone that reminds him of his cell phone ringing, he will believe that's the case.

- ⑤ Others believe that ringxiety -- or in this case, **phantom ringing** -- simply stems from confusion due to the frequency of most stock cell phone ringtones and the location of our ears. Most standard cell ringtones play at a frequency of around 1,000 hertz. Humans are particularly attuned to pick up on sounds at this range, especially if they're single-toned, like many ring tones. But because people have ears on either side of their heads, it's difficult for them to pinpoint the source of a sound, particularly at this frequency -- for example, from a phone or from a bird outside. To some, this explains the phenomenon of phantom ringing. This doesn't hold true for multi-tonal rings, however, such as an MP3 of a popular song.

Those who opt to set the phone to "vibrate" rather than "ring" aren't off the hook either. Even stranger than phantom ringing is the **phantom vibration** phenomenon. This is also a part of the ringxiety that David Laramie studied, although fewer ideas about its origins have been suggested. It's similar to phantom ringing, but phantom vibration is a physical rather than an auditory hallucination.

It's also similar to another, well-documented phenomenon called **phantom limb** syndrome. In this medically recognized condition, amputees -- people who've had limbs removed -- report feeling pain in limbs that are no longer attached to their bodies. Is it possible that people have become as attached to their cell phones as they are to their own arms and legs?

Though ringxiety is little more than an annoyance, it may say a lot about the minds of those who experience it. Read on to explore the psychology behind wireless society.

Video Gallery: BlackBerry Massage
If you suffer from "crackberry" addiction, you can get a specialized massage to take away those thumb-typing aches and pains. Learn more in this video from Reuters.

Ringxiety and its Psycho-social Consequences

If cell phones and BlackBerries have become so popular that some people imagine they are having incoming calls, is it possible the users have become too dependent on these devices? What other psychological effects do these devices have on us?

- 10 HowStuffWorks is not the first to ask this question. In his study on ringxiety, David Laramie found a link between increased cell phone use and phantom ring/vibration experiences. He found that two-thirds of the people he surveyed for the study said they'd experienced ringxiety. Those who experienced the phenomenon the most -- 67 percent of the survey population -- also used the phone the most. They used up more minutes, had larger phone bills, tended to be younger and also sent more text messages [source: Newswise].



Courtesy Stan Honda/AFP/Getty Images
David Laramie's study found that people who prefer to send text messages are lonelier than those who prefer to call.

The fact that the people who spent more time using their phone experienced ringxiety more often comes as little surprise. But there is another aspect of Laramie's study that may be more revealing. He found that people who preferred to text others rather than call tended to be more lonely and socially anxious.

Does that mean the way a person uses his phone can predict his personality type? Possibly. Another study shows that phones may directly affect a person's personality. Specifically, wireless devices can make us less happy.

In 2005, psychologist Noelle Chesley conducted a study of 1,367 men and women who work, have families and use cell phones. She found an increase in stress and a decrease in family satisfaction among both men and women who use cell phones. Chesley believes this is due to what she and other researchers call a blurring of the traditional lines between work and family life.

This blurring occurs when **role boundary permeability** takes place. Under this condition, a person's role in one part of their life merges with another role. For example, a woman might get a call at work by one of her kids looking for the TV remote at home. In this case, the woman's role of mother has infiltrated her separate role as employee.

- 15 The spillover from family life into work is much more likely to happen for women than for men, according to Chesley's study. But men and women alike suffer similar amounts of spillover from work into family life, and the study points to cell phones as the reason for work intruding into family life. Chesley's findings show that while people with cell phones suffer from increased stress and lowered family satisfaction, e-mail -- a more "passive" form of communication -- does not produce the same results. This suggests that cell phones are more intrusive than other forms of communication, and our happiness suffers as a result of this intrusion.

So the next time you hear your phone ringing but no one's calling, or you feel your phone vibrate in your pocket when it's really in another room, step back for a moment. Perhaps it's time to ponder the possibility that you should take a vacation -- one where you leave your cell phone at home.

For more information on cell phones, anxiety and related articles, read the next page.

Lots More Information

Related HowStuffWorks Articles

- [How Cell Phones Work](#)
- [How a BlackBerry Works](#)
- [How Addiction Works](#)
- [How Telephones Work](#)
- [How does a vibrating cell phone or pager work?](#)



Cell-Phone Junkies Feel Phantom Ring Vibrations

Friday , October 12, 2007

Associated Press

NEW YORK —

ADVERTISEMENT

If your hipbone is connected to your BlackBerry or your thighbone is connected to your cell phone, those vibrations you're feeling in the car, in your pajamas, in the shower, may be coming from your headbone.

Many mobile phone addicts and BlackBerry junkies report feeling vibrations when there are none, or feeling as if they're wearing a cell phone when they're not.

[Click here for FOXNews.com's Personal Technology Center.](#)

The first time it happened to Jonathan Zaback, a manager at the public relations company Burson-Marsteller, he was out with friends and showing off his new BlackBerry Curve.

"While they were looking at it, I felt this vibration on my side. I reached down to grab it and realized there was no BlackBerry there."

- ⑤ Zaback, who said he keeps his BlackBerry by his bed while he sleeps, checks it if he gets up in the middle of the night and wakes to an alarm on the BlackBerry each day, said this didn't worry him.

"As long as it doesn't mean a tumor is growing on my leg because of my BlackBerry, I'm fine with it," he said. "Some people have biological clocks, I might have a biological BlackBerry."

Some users compare the feeling to a phantom limb, which Merriam-Webster's medical dictionary defines as "an often painful sensation of the presence of a limb that has been amputated."

"Even when I don't have the BlackBerry physically on my person, I do find myself adjusting my posture when I sit to accommodate it," said Dawn Mena, an independent technology consultant based in Thousand Oaks, Calif. "I also laugh at myself as I reach to unclip it (I swear it's there) and find out I don't even have it on."

Research in the area is scant, but theories abound about the phenomenon, which has been termed "ringxiety" or "fauxcellarm."

- ⑩ Anecdotal evidence suggests "people feel the phone is part of them" and "they're not whole" without their phones, since the phones connect them to the world, said B.J. Fogg, director of research and design at Stanford University's Persuasive Technology Lab.

"As human beings, we're so tapped into our community, responsiveness to what's going on, we're so attuned to the threat of isolation and rejection, we'd rather make a mistake than miss a call," he said. "Our brain is going to be scanning and scanning and scanning to see if we have to respond socially to someone."

In certain circles, phantom vibrations are a point of pride.

"Of course I get them," said Fred Wilson, a managing partner of Union Square Ventures, an early-stage venture capital firm based in New York. "I've been getting them for over 10 years since I started with the pager-style BlackBerry."

For others, it's one more tech irritation.

- ⑮ Jeff Posner, president and owner of e-ventsreg.com in New Jersey, which allows users to register and check in for trade shows and other events, stopped wearing his BlackBerry on his belt because of regular false alarms.

He put it in the chest pocket of his shirt but found that was worse, because now his phone dials automatically, which has created a new annoyance: It always calls the same person, he said.

"Phones have favorite friends," he said. "It's like your phones have a thing for each other. Of course, it's a female friend, so my wife is like, 'You're calling her all the time.'"

Complicating things further, his own phone is his sales manager's favorite friend.

"Her phone calls me all the time," he said. "I'll get a call and hear whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. It's her, walking."

- ⑯ "Dilbert" cartoonist Scott Adams wrote on his blog, dilbert.org, that he feels the phantom vibrations, "about 10 times per day" and thinks "'Ooh, it's an e-mail with good news!' So far, the only good news is that my pocket is vibrating, and that's OK because it gives me hope that the condition might spread to the rest of my pants."

Jake Ward, a former press secretary for Sen. Olympia Snowe and current director of Qorvis Communications Inc., a public relations company in Washington, D.C., said he switched his BlackBerry from his hip to his jacket pocket six months ago, but still feels it there.

"Aftershocks," he said.

He also claims to "pre-feel" a new message or call.

"I'll feel it, look at it. It's not vibrating. Then it starts vibrating," he said. "I am one with my BlackBerry."

- ⑰ For some, it's a matter of projecting hope onto their wireless device.

Don Katz said he came out of retirement to work as director of wireline product management at SpinVox Inc. because he was so impressed with the company's voicemail product.

He worked on its recent launch at SaskTel, the telecom company in Saskatchewan, Canada.

That may be why, on a recent train trip to New York, he kept checking his phone, because he said he was sure it was vibrating.

"It's like, my phone should be ringing," he said. "It's anticipatory vibrations."

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