

Wednesday, 8 December 2021

I took my phone out of my phone

For the past few years ... I haven't had a smartphone.



Instead, I usually carry these three devices:

- a flip phone (this one is by Sunbeam Wireless, an F1 Orchid)
- an iPod Touch
- another iPod Touch

(Note this “lifestyle” could work just as well with only one iPod Touch. I’ll explain further below why I roll with two instead of one.)

Flip Phone + iPod Touch ... Lifestyle

So, just a disclaimer ... this isn't a perfect system ... but it's more or less been “working” for me for a while now.

By “working,” I mean:

- I feel more agency in relationship to my handheld technology
- I am more easily able to enter a calm state when I’m out in the world
- People can reach me, and I can reach people, when needed

It all started in 2018. I remember accidentally losing my iPhone one day at school while teaching, and thinking ... “I’m never going back to the way things were!”

At the time, I felt there was way too much power in my iPhone alone. It was amazing, but also often debilitating. It was difficult for me to be alone with my thoughts sometimes, with the power of the iPhone and internet coursing through my body, especially when I was in transit. (I took the train often to teach at universities, sometimes spending up to 4 hours on a train at a time.) Of course, I could delete the apps that caused me trouble on my iPhone, but it was almost too easy to install them again. I wanted to set up an environment that would enable me to be my best self (out in the world / in transit) ... doing calm activities like reading, spending alone time with my thoughts / feelings, maybe journal-ing, etc., instead of refreshing Twitter, for instance.

calm internet

So essentially, I “took my phone out of my phone” ... because the iPod Touch has (more or less) all the capabilities of an iPhone ... just without the phone aspect.

With the iPod Touch, I can still use iMessage and other messaging apps. (I just need to be connected to wifi.) And I can still use most other apps. I can even use apps that require phone verification ... I just have my flip phone at the ready and confirm when necessary. (Some people are surprised I can use ride-share apps like Lyft and Uber with only an iPod Touch, but yes, it's possible!)

iPods

Often, I get this funny question:

“Apple still makes iPods?”

Yes. They're called iPod Touches. They're less than \$200, and they're basically an iPhone without the phone part. The camera isn't as good, but everything else is pretty decent.

People always remark how light and small my iPod Touch is ... it’s the same general dimensions as the iPhone 5s, but a little thinner.

Because most people use larger phones these days, sometimes I’ll use apps that were clearly not designed with the iPod Touch in mind, which is unfortunate. But I haven’t found an app I can’t use yet, more just ones that are sized a little awkwardly.

“Why do you have two iPods?”

You might be wondering why I have two iPods instead of just one. This is a matter of personal preference, and actually I rolled with just one iPod for a long time.

1) Light Pod

One of my iPods is my “light pod” meaning I don’t put social apps on it. It’s for taking out with me when I go on a walk, when I simply want to listen to my music and podcasts rather than be distracted by anything social. Most of the apps on my “light pod” are “offline first,” meaning their data is already downloaded to the device and I really don’t need to be connected anyway. (This naming / division was definitely inspired by the flip phone which I don’t have, but like the general idea of!) If there is an emergency and I need to contact someone, or someone needs to contact me, they can call my flip phone.

2) Messaging Pod

The other iPod might be called my “messaging / cursed pod” because I allow it to have any social app, or really anything. My most used apps on this pod are probably iMessage, TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram (although I’m trying to take a break from some of the social media lately).

So when I go out into the world, I bring my flip phone and at least one iPod. If I’m going to be social, I bring both pods. If I’m going on a solo reflective journey, I just bring my light pod.

Flip Phone

I use the Sunbeam Wireless F1 Orchid. (This is a fairly new acquisition for me ... before, I had a generic AT&T flip phone.)

Sunbeam Wireless is a pretty thoughtful, wholesome, and cute company, and so far I’ve only had good experiences with the phone.

I’m using the “Orchid,” which is the most feature-full of their three phones. The “Dandelion,” on the other hand, only has calling and no text messaging. The “Daisy” is somewhere in between.

One primary feature of the Orchid is that it doesn’t open Internet links from text messages. This is on purpose.

The Orchid does texting, and thankfully it has a pretty reliable speech to text feature. It’s fairly easy to text, actually!

The Orchid does have maps, and so far I’ve only had to use it when I got lost once walking around Green-Wood Cemetery. It’s not the most easy to use map app, but it works if you’re genuinely lost.

Anyway, those are my initial thoughts ... let me know if you have any questions, or if you roll with a similar setup, or have related ideas 😊

Updates:

- 12.10.21 — Jeff wrote a post about their flip phone setup! Wow now I have a Sunbeam friend 😊
- 1.8.22 — I have been realizing how much this setup helped me pre-pandemic. Having two pods versus one, to be honest, doesn’t help me that much in the pandemic, since I am mostly at home. I am dreaming of new configurations 😊

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light
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