

Mobile Phones and WI-FI - a health risk for the online counsellor? *Philippa Weitz*

As online counsellors and psychotherapists we spend a lot of time online. If you're using either a mobile phone or internet via WI-FI this article might interest you. There seem to be divided views over whether the level of radio waves we are being bombarded with are bad for our health. This short article gives some examples and some recommendations as to what you can do to minimize their effect within your professional context.

Let's start by putting the facts into a context. How might a WI-FI radio wave compare say to a microwave? *The intensity of a kitchen microwave is about 100,000 times stronger than a WI-FI signal.*

"The oven is a targeted device that operates at very high voltages and short distances. Wi-Fi routers operate at very low voltages, broadcast in all directions, and are used at relatively long distances.

Since radio waves follow the inverse square law – like light, sound and gravity – then each time you double the distance, you get only a quarter of the energy. In other words, the signal strength falls off very rapidly. At normal operating distances, Wi-Fi's intensity is generally so low that it's not worth worrying about: it's just part of the "smog" that is generated by radio and TV signals, AC mains wiring, the motors in home appliances, and the universe in general." The Guardian (Thursday 27th September 2012, [http://www.theguardian.com/technology/askjack/2012/sep/27/wi-fi-health-risks, accessed 11 January 2016]

What might be dangerous radio wave items for us? The mobile phone (oh dear, more or less attached to my hip!) comes top of the list, largely because it is held close to the head, where a WI-FI router might be quite a distance away.

Examples

Let's make some comparisons to demonstrate this and get things into perspective before making recommendations:

- You get bigger doses of radio waves from a 20 minutes mobile phone call than from a year's WI-FI.
- 20 laptops and two routers are the equivalent of one mobile phone.

Suggestions

And now for a few suggestions to help keep you safe and limit the various radio waves flying around us.

For the mobile phone

1. Avoid making mobile phone calls when the reception is bad as the waves are at their strongest then.
2. Don't use the telephone in your car. The radio waves are trapped inside (same effect as the Faraday cage). Only send SMS.
3. In the train, this increases the Faraday Effect - again only send SMS.
4. Use airplane mode and hands free kit.
5. Go outside to make your phone calls.

For your Internet WI-FI Connection

6. Think about giving up on WI-FI at home and go back to using an Ethernet cable and deactivate your WI-FI. (This is what I have done). Not only will this reduce the waves around you but you'll have a more stable and stronger internet.

DISCLAIMER

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