

Unwired: Gaining Control over Addictive Technologies
Book forthcoming with Cambridge University Press 2022
Professor Gaia Bernstein
Seton Hall University School of Law

Unwired shatters the illusion that we are the choice-makers over how we spend our time. We have never made an autonomous decision to spend so many of our waking hours on our screens. We blame ourselves for excessively using our screens and seek self-help-measures to limit our time online. But these measures are bound to fail because we are not the choosers. The technology industry dictates our choices by manipulatively designing its devices, games and social networks to retain our attention.

The Coronavirus pandemic increased our reliance on technology. We now spend more time online than ever before. We already realize it may be impossible to turn back the clock. *Unwired* seeks to relieve the guilt many people increasingly feel and shift the moral responsibility and the solution from users to corporations. The technology industry uses addictive features in its products because its business model relies on our time and attention. Only technology companies then can resolve the over-use problem by re-designing their products.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that corporate control is masked as individual choice. *Unwired* delves into the past of the tobacco and junk food wars, and more recent privacy battles, to draw a blueprint of a movement for change. It is the first book to describe the legal tools that can exert pressure for re-design to contain over-use. *Unwired* predicts that as despair among users – especially parents – grows, only immediate real substantive design and business model changes could prevent an onslaught of legal challenges led by a popular movement to curb over-use.