

# Do you need a digital detox?

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing measures, many of us are spending a lot more time on screens now more than ever. Whether it's smartphones, iPads or computer screens the use of technology has become a new way to socialise, work and keep in touch with loved ones.

When most of us wake in the morning our first instinct is to reach for the phone - it's usually next to the bed. We then unlock it 70 more times during the day.

In a world of social distancing this is possibly much more.

While maintaining contact with others is important, the downside of too much screen use is when you find yourself mindlessly scrolling through newsfeeds or regularly 'phone-checking'. That quick "phone-check" can lead to up to 20 minutes of attention loss, and there is now good evidence to suggest that if our attention is broken regularly during the day this may lead to permanent problems with our concentration.

## When was the last time you switched off for a few hours, let alone 24 hours?

A digital detox is good for us - it gives us time to get back in tune with the rhythms of our body and lets us dictate how we spend our own time rather than be dictated to by technology. Detox involves switching off all communication technology and a "deep" detox should last between 24 and 72 hours.

### Follow these 5 simple steps:

- 1. Plan and prepare for your detox.** Make a list of the technology you use and the types of activities in which you engage most often. Plan other activities for the detox period that you can engage in instead of turning to technology. Take all technology out of the bedroom and replace with an alarm clock and other technology alternatives such as some magazines or a book, a nice pen and paper so that you can enjoy making notes again (and remember that you recall more of what you write down). Lastly, tell everyone what you're doing and let them know that you will be off-line and log off.
- 2. Begin by taking short breaks from the digital world.** Put all technology away at mealtimes and in the bedroom. When you see the benefits of less screen time try progress to taking half days or even Sundays digitally free!

- 3. Find the off buttons on your devices.** (If you cannot convince yourself to turn them off completely at first then at least turn off push notifications!). Consider trying out new hobbies - you will learn how to entertain yourself without technology.
- 4. Log back on and repeat.** When you log back on you should try to rethink what is urgent, what is important and what is neither. Consider unsubscribing from many email lists. When the alarm goes off in the morning give yourself time before checking your device- start the day on your terms. During the day set a specific time to check, and a time limit for how long you will spend on email and social media.



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