

# MENTAL HEALTH

POWER DOWN YOUR DEVICES ... AND YOUR LIFE

Technology has allowed infinite access to information gathering and social connection, but is being constantly connected at home, at work, and during your leisure time affecting your mental health?

- Do you ever find yourself continually checking your phone for a reply to a text message?
- How many times a day do you look at your Facebook Newsfeed or profile? What emotions are attached to how many likes or responses you get on different social platforms?
- Have you ever had your words twisted in an email that moved from an innocent comment to a full blown email argument?



Technology is supposed to make our lives easier, less stressful, and simplify our workload. Overthinking that last text message, awaiting a work email after 5pm, or analyzing that Facebook comment could be taking its toll on your emotional health and your relationships. Studies show that being disconnected for too long can also cause anxiety. So where is the balance? The goal of any healthy lifestyle is to promote the positive outcomes by removing or setting boundaries around the negative influences.

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**Here are a few tips for balancing technology with everyday life.**

## 1. Let the workday end.

Many people feel that they should be constantly accessible to their workplace. When the workday doesn't end, there is potential for a stressful situation, long awaited email, or pressing deadline to draw you away from your personal time. Setting boundaries for work time and personal time can positively influence your relationships, decrease stress and anxiety, and promote more restful sleep. When you leave work, remind yourself to switch from your work role, to your personal role.

## 2. Limit distractions.

Set aside one device-free hour a day and reclaim the skill of being unplugged. Read a book, practice an instrument, cuddle someone you care about and just talk, listen to music that you love, draw or paint, cook, or think about a creative project. Use your imagination and foster creativity!

## 3. Create more face-to-face interactions.

The art of human communication goes beyond texting in caps or sending an emoji. We need other people in our lives in a meaningful way. Body language, facial expression, and tone are important life skills that could determine the outcome of a job interview, may resolve conflict, and will create more meaningful intimate conversations and connections with others. Set a goal to have one face-to-face social interaction per week with a friend or family member you would normally text or reach out to on a social media platform.

## 4. Create an intentional focus on downtime in your life.

Power down your devices, and your life. Limiting your access to technology can allow you the opportunity to do more of what you love. Have a favourite hobby or passion you didn't think you had time for? An instrument you've always wanted to learn? Take one day and log the hours you mindlessly scroll through Facebook, text friends, and check non-work related email. You will probably find a few extra hours in your day to reconnect with those things in your life that make you unique and that bring joy and fulfillment.

## 5. Allow your mind to rest.

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Our brains are becoming conditioned to move from one thing to the next and to always be “doing something”. Our mind needs gaps of time and space to rest and take a break from mental activity. Taking these breaks can keep us more productive. Take a walk without your phone or earbuds and enjoy the sounds of nature. Let your mind and senses wander. Consider simple meditation and spend some time practicing being in the present moment. Discover or strengthen your spirituality, spend a moment in prayer and give yourself the gift of time and space.

While technology has its benefits, learning when to power down can protect you from the negative impact that digital overload can have in your life. It’s difficult to escape technology altogether, but it’s important to ensure that it’s not hindering our efforts to lead a balanced and meaningful life. Which is more important, your digital life or your real life?



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