



Tips for a Successful Digital Detox

Do you check your iPhone as soon as you wake up in the morning? Are you hunched over your laptop after work? You might be a good candidate for a digital detox. Even if you don't get twitchy when your gadgets start running out of juice, and aren't troubled by eyestrain, headaches or neck problems, it still might be time to take a break. By periodically unplugging, you can start reclaiming the real life experiences that all those gadgets steal from us daily (albeit with our full permission).

To get into an unplugged groove, start by taking baby steps and keep challenging yourself to cut the cord a bit further every day without, of course, endangering your life. Here are a few ways to get started:

- **Re-learn how to entertain yourself without the glow of a screen.** Instead, learn how to be still and quiet the mind. Meditation, without the help of an app, is a great way to clear your head, as is simply "spacing out." Refresh your brain by giving it a few moments throughout the day to wander, to take in the surroundings and appreciate where you are in the moment in the real world, not the digital one.
- **In the evenings, say "lights out" and actually mean it.** We must create a nightly digital sundown to support your physical and mental health. These 'machines' we love so much can disrupt melatonin production, sleep quality and mood. To help your body achieve the rest it needs, embrace the darkness — as in detox nightly, simply by banishing all electronics from the bedroom.
- **Go back to your old friends, pen and paper.** How to give your brain, eyes, wrists and fingers a much-needed rest? Step away from the blue-light-beaming screen and go old school: pen and paper every now and then! Make notes, doodle during dull meetings, write a love song or start sketching — whatever moves you. Using pen and paper instead of feverishly typing and tapping can help liberate body and soul, giving you a sense of physical and mental freedom the digital world cannot.

- **Get a little less social.** social media may keep us all connected and make us feel a part of the larger community, but they are also major time and attention sucks. If you want to regain more control over your digital life, slash your social media time.
 - Put the brakes on your email. How to combat the influx? Some ideas:
 - Put on the out-of-office notification for a few hours a day, instructing colleagues to call you if it's urgent.
 - Turn off incoming email audio pings and alerts.
 - Set email preferences to receive emails hourly instead of as they happen.
 - Set a timer to remind you to check email once or twice an hour.
- **Hide your smart phone.** If you've dropped your landline but still need to be able to receive a late night call from the kids, keep the phone close enough so you can hear it ring but keep it face down or covered so the screen doesn't wake you up when someone emails you in the middle of the night.
- **Get a "dumb" watch, not a smart phone.** An old-fashioned watch will give you one less reason to constantly check your phone.
Spend time in places where cell phone use is frowned upon eg Yoga class, group meditation events, places of worship, the lap lane at the local pool etc. None of these activities are compatible with the use of digital devices – so check them out!
- **Put it on the calendar.** Make time for periods of digital detox, and write them down as you would any other appointment. Use Outlook, a good old wall calendar, and mark it down just as you would any other appointment.
Set a nightly electronic sunset time for yourself and your family and stick to it. Commit to a weekly digital detox and try doing a weekend, completely unplugged. From there, it's just a hop-skip to a week-long digital sabbatical ... or what we used to call "a holiday"!