

Take a Break from Your Digital Devices

Cellphones, tablets, laptops and other digital devices are undoubtedly handy. But overuse can undermine your health and happiness. From time to time, it's good to detox from your gadgets.

WHY YOU MAY NEED A DIGITAL DETOX

Depression. Some research has tied frequent social media use to depression and decreased well-being.

Weakened bonds. Among people who are constantly checking their devices, four in 10 say they often feel disconnected from their families.

Stress. More than 80 percent of Americans say they frequently check texts, emails and social media accounts—and that can lead to stress.

Decreased concentration. Frequent interruptions from beeping and buzzing devices make it difficult to focus.

Impaired sleep. Researchers have found that using digital devices close to bedtime can interfere with getting a good night's sleep.

5 WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- 1 Pick your detox times.** Take breaks from your devices at meals, during outings with family and friends, and at least a half hour before bedtime.
- 2 Turn off notifications** for texts, emails and social media. Silence your phone during detox times, too.
- 3 Put devices out of sight.** Research has shown that just seeing a cellphone sitting there can be distracting, even if you don't use it.
- 4 Let others know.** Explain to family and friends that you unplug during specific times, but you'll respond to their messages later.
- 5 Make it a family affair.** To create a family plan for the use of mobile devices and TV, go to healthychildren.org/mediateplan.

Sources include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychological Association, *Depression and Anxiety*, *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *Social Psychology* and National Sleep Foundation.

