TIPS FOR MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Try these simple changes to live more intentionally with your devices right now.

Social media is place where we can connect, a place to share with others, and a place to express our feelings. It can also be a place of self-comparison, constant FOMO, a way to channel addictive tendencies, and overall can be quite harmful for our mental health. We do have a choice when it comes to managing the way we use it. Here are a few tips for leading a balanced lifestyle with the overwhelming presence of social media.

SET TIMES TO GO ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
Don't pick up your phone and open Instagram or Twitter whenever you think of it. Rather set a couple breaks throughout the day to check updates. This will help break out of habits. Another solution is to create "speed bumps": small obstacles that force you to slow down and make sure that when you do check your phone, it's the result of a conscious choice. Put a rubber band around your phone as a physical reminder to pause, or set a lock screen image that asks you to confirm that you really want to proceed.

SET YOUR PHONE DOWN.
If you don't treat your phone as a necessity for daily life, you won't wire your brain to think it is one. Leave your phone at home while you go for a walk. Stare out of a window during your commute instead of checking your email. At first, you may be surprised by how powerfully you crave your phone. (Note: Do keep it close by in case your kids, friends, family, or colleagues are trying to get ahold of you. Your phone can be useful for communication.

LOG OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA APPS.
Logging out of social media apps on our phones helps the time spent on them feel more final. It also adds another step when trying to go back on and check social media. Adding another obstacle when it comes to going on social media can decrease the likelihood of going on the apps in the first place.

KEEP YOUR PHONE OUT OF YOUR HAND WHEN SPEAKING TO SOMEONE.
Being able to communicate without a phone in hand or readily accessible is an important skill. It also shows that you care about the conversation you are having.

CALL A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER.
Texting or emailing can sometimes feel like a chore. Talking on the phone is a more natural and communicative way of checking in with those who are close to you. (Note: this tip isn't for everyone or for all circumstances)

DURING CLASS OR AT WORK, DON'T KEEP YOUR PHONE ON YOUR DESK.
Having our phone in our peripherals, within arms reach, or in our pockets can be distracting. Without having your phone or devices in sight will keep us focused on our work and help us be more productive. Instead, put your phone in a drawer or your bag.

REFRAME THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA.

Many people equate spending less time on their phones with denying themselves pleasure — and who likes to do that? Instead, think of it this way: The time you spend on your phone is time you're *not* spending doing other pleasurable things, like hanging out with a friend or pursuing a hobby. Instead of thinking of it as "spending less time on your phone," think of it as "spending more time on your life."

ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU WANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO.

When we decide what to pay attention to in the moment, we are making a broader decision about how we want to spend our time. The people who design apps desperately want our attention, because that's how they make money. Have you ever wondered why so many social media apps are free? It's because advertisers are the customers — and your attention is what's being sold. So ask yourself: What do *you* want to pay attention to?

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS.

Create triggers that will remind you of your goals and make it easier to live up to them. If you want to spend more time reading, leave a book on your bedside table. If you want to cook more, lay out a shopping list for that recipe you're eager to try. On the flip side, avoid triggers that will set you up for failure. Delete social media apps from your phone. Disable notifications. Establish a rule for yourself and your family of not keeping phones on the table during meals.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY.

When you notice that you're in the midst of a phone spiral, ask yourself: What's your posture like? How's your breathing? Is whatever you're doing on your phone making you feel good? Do you *want* to be using it right now? The more tuned in you are to your own experiences in the moment, the easier it will be to change your behavior.

GET EXISTENTIAL ABOUT IT.

If all else fails, consider your own mortality. How many people on their deathbeds do you think are going to say, "I wish I'd spent more time on Facebook"? Keep asking yourself the same question.

USE THE SIGHT OF OTHERS ON THEIR PHONES AS A REMINDER OF YOUR OWN INTENTIONS.

The sight of someone else pulling out his or her phone on the elevator probably makes you want to check yours as well. But with practice, you can transform this into a cue for a new, healthier habit. When seeing other people reach for their phones, try to use it as a cue to take a deep breath and relax.