The 5-Minute Guide to Reconnect with Your Life

- Special Report -

It is becoming very challenging to put the phone down. Not only are most people working in front of a screen all day, but most do it at home too. Several people go home after work and sit in front of the TV and browse their phones.

We live a digitalized life. Over 80% of the population owns a mobile device, and 57% have more than one type. Not only are our electronic devices connected to the internet, but it is also in our cars, fridges, watches, games, and even our homes. This omnipresence of technology begs the question: how can we free ourselves from an addiction to the digital world?

Here's a short survey that will give you an idea of your relationship with technology. While this is not a scientific survey, it gives you an idea of your relationship with the digital world.

	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Do you sleep with your phone next to your bed?			
Do you look at social media an hour or less before bed?			
Is it hard for you to sit in silence (ex: on your commute or in a car)?			
Do you eat most of your meals in front of a screen?			
Do you use your phone as an alarm?			
Do you check social media while you are at work?			
Do you usually check your phone as soon as there is a notification?			
Do you turn on the TV when you come home from work?			
Do you have a smartwatch?			
Would you say that your daily screen time is more than 5 hours a day?			
Is looking at your phone an automatic behavior that you don't always do consciously?			
Do you have a hard time falling asleep or staying asleep?			

	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Do you have difficulty with your attention or concentration?			
Do you check your phone or browse social media when you drive?			
Do you sometimes feel like your phone vibrate, and yet there are no notifications?			
Do you feel anxious if you forget your phone or don't have access to it for a while?			
Does it irritate you when people tell you that you are not listening or paying attention to them while they speak to you?			
Would you consider your electronic devices as your most valuable belongings, something you could not live without?			
TOTALS			

Now, calculate the totals. What do you notice?

__Mostly NO__: Great, that means that you have found a spot in your life where you use devices and they don't use you, and admittedly don't govern your life.

__Mostly YES__: This is a sign it's time to break up with your smart devices. Your life seems to be heavily influenced by your screen time; you might be spending a lot of time and energy on devices that don't fulfill you. Besides, if you said "yes" to almost all the questions, you are likely an artist at escaping reality. It might be time for you to take control of your life. It won't be easy to unplug, but with determination and patience, you will get there!

__Mostly I DON'T KNOW__: This is not necessarily a good thing. You might be in denial and unable to recognize your behavior. This guide will help you become more conscious of your habits and live a more fulfilling life.

The following steps are essential to help you make a lifestyle change so you can adopt a healthier relationship with electronic devices and reconnect with your life.

Step 1: Identifying Motivation

When we want to make a change in our lives, we need to identify a reason to sustain it. The best ideas are the ones that are close to our hearts as opposed to being imposed by others. You can locate your motivations by finding answers to the following question: *Why do I want to disconnect from the digital world?* Write down all the reasons that come to mind. Make sure that you feel connected to personal reasons such as "to have more energy and time with people I love," as opposed to extrinsic motivations like "because my partner or friends said so."

Step 2: Being Ready to Change

Once you've listed your motivations, ask yourself: *On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not really and 10 being absolutely), how motivated am I to disconnect from the digital world?* If your score is under 5, it might not be the right time for you. You have an opportunity to reconsider your motivation and also the timing. A rating above 6 is more likely to lead you to success.

Step 3: Identifying Actions

The last step is dedicated to action. Make a list of all the things you could do to help you reduce your time in the digital world. Here are a few examples:

- Put physical distance between you and the digital world. Get rid of the TV in the bedroom or leave your phone in the kitchen when sleeping.
- Assign offline time during the day, like during dinner or two hours after waking up.
- Turn off notifications on the phone.
- When not at work, limit your screen time to two hours per day.
- Assign days when you spend time with people you enjoy being around.

The key to success is to identify realistic, practical ways for you. It doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach. Slowly reducing your time in front of a screen will allow you to get more comfortable with reality.

Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness doesn't have to be a complex meditation practice. It can be a simple exercise of taking a moment to connect with your breath by taking three deep breaths. Mindfulness is the act of observing our experience in the present moment. Using the five senses is a great way to practice mindfulness. Observe what you smell, see, hear, feel, or taste. This practice will bring you to the present moment.

Do One Thing at a Time

Our society tends to encourage multitasking. On the other hand, it has created individuals who have a hard time being present. If you are spending time with a friend, be present, listen, and interact with the individual. Turn off your notifications on your phone and keep eye contact with the person who is interacting with you.

Train Your Mind

It is possible to train your mind to focus on the present. You can do so by recognizing when you are thinking of the past or the future. Choose a day or an hour when you will observe your thoughts. During that time, catch yourself when you are having thoughts that are not in the present moment. Like when you think of something that happened in your past or hoping for the future. Once you catch yourself, take three deep breaths to bring your attention back to the present moment.

Enjoy Your Meals

Many people have learned to eat in front of the screen. Unplugging while you eat allows you to be present and enjoy the food that you eat. After every bite, force yourself to set down your utensils and taste your delicious food. Observe the texture, the taste, and be mindful of every bite you take.

Create a Schedule

It has been proven that a routine can trick your body into falling asleep at a specific time. Try to observe yourself. Is there a time when you are tired? If so, make sure you go to bed before that time. Create a routine that allows you to complete everything before that time and go to bed. You can also set an alarm to let you know it's time to prepare for bedtime. That way, you are less likely to forget what time it is and be more successful at implementing a routine.

Have a Bedtime Ritual

When you go to bed, instead of scrolling down posts on social media, take 15 minutes to acknowledge what you are grateful for in the present moment. List all the things that at this moment you are thankful for. Whether it is the comfort of the bed you sleep in, the beautiful day you had, or the roof you have above your head. Being grateful is a fantastic way to appreciate the present moment.

Exercise

Exercises like yoga or running can be a great way to practice being in the present moment. Research shows that when you exercise, you are more likely to increase the control of your mind. Exercising is also connected with increased attention in school and academic scores.

Meditate

Meditation is practicing awareness. Many people believe that they have to stop thinking when they meditate. Yet, meditation is not about stopping yourself from doing something; it is more about observing what is happening within you and around you. A simple way to meditate is to sit down and focus on a sound in the room. That sound can be a fan or a refrigerator. When you catch yourself drifting from that focus, bring your awareness back to the sound. You can do that for 15 minutes a day. The goal is to observe yourself drifting and go back to the task.

Read

Reading is a great way to increase your ability to focus and pay attention to one task at a time. If you are reading on your mobile device, make sure to turn off all notifications so that you are not distracted during your reading. A great time to read is before bed, as it allows you to disconnect from the digital world and also calm your mind before going to sleep. It is preferable to use a book, which doesn't stimulate the brain as a screen would. Your local library likely has excellent books for you!

Write in a Journal

Journaling is another activity that can be done before bed and is a great way to focus your thoughts on one thing. Nowadays, there are useful journals that encourage thinking, or you can go simple and get a notebook and write your day in it or make it a grateful journal.

Make a List

How many times have you found yourself distracted from work because you had a sudden question in your head that led you to browse Google for 15 minutes? It is so easy to be distracted when you give energy to every thought you have. Instead of acting on every idea, make a list. Keep a pen and paper close, and when you have a thought like, What is a good chicken recipe or What is the weather tomorrow, write it down. The list will be an excellent way to put your thoughts down without distracting you for too long. When you need a break from work, look at your list.

Increasing our awareness of how we use technology is key to succeeding in adopting healthier behaviors. Not only are we more likely to change our habits, but we are also more likely to change our lives by being in control of our screen time.
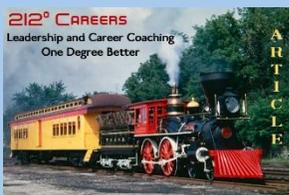
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