



Digital Detox

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When people talk about “digital detox”, there's often the presumption that frequent exposure to digital devices interferes with our ability to connect with others and reduces the quality of what little contact we do have. The recommended solutions usually involved some sort of restriction or withdrawal from digital engagement.

For example, some suggest that one put aside one's smartphones and digital devices at specific times such as at the dinner table, an hour before bedtime, or out in nature. Others advised disconnecting for longer stretches such as after work or over the weekend. Some advocated week-long and even month-long retreats from which one completely disengages from computer devices and reconnects with nature.

These interventions struck are sometimes not only excessive but also unrealistic and even shortsighted. Although it is true that technology can distract us from the *here and now*, it can also enhance our experience of the present moment. In addition, technology is now intricately interwoven into our lives—cars, phones, appliances, shopping—it will soon be as difficult to separate ourselves from computer technologies as it is now for us to live without electricity.

Why Digital?

- Access
- Availability
- Information
- Learning
- Connection
- Improved communication
- Bridging cultures
- Higher productivity
- Control
- Positive engagement
- Play
- Improved health
- Mobility



Why Not?

- Disconnection
- Reduced privacy
- No down-time
- Isolation
- Superficial engagement
- Physical strain
- Lower productivity
- Reduced spontaneity
- Social comparison
- Distortion of reality
- Compulsive behaviors
- Insomnia/Physical disorders

It can be helpful to focus first on the benefits we get from technology. Usually what resonates most for people is *access*—to family, friends, colleagues, information, knowledge, learning opportunities, other cultures, etc. Technology also provides us with opportunities to control over our environment. It can allow us to fine-tune our experience. That’s just the tip of the iceberg when we consider technological advances in healthcare, transportation, science, space exploration, etc.

Of course, the dark side of technology, especially with computers and “smart” devices, is that they can lead to distraction and superficial engagement. People sometimes feel, for better or worse, that they are *too* connected—that they are always available and can’t detach and decompress. In addition, because what is presented in the digital world is often exaggerated and stylized, it can lead to distorted perceptions of normalcy. As a result, it may lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment.

Although these hazards are very real, there are strategies that we can use to manage our digital engagement and use it to our benefit. There are definitely times when we need to put our devices aside and focus on the ground we’re standing on, the people in whose company we are, and the body we’re occupying. However, we also think that technology provides us with many useful ways to help us connect with ourselves, others, and our environment more meaningfully.

How to Manage Digital Engagement

- Monitor your use
- Be mindful of yourself when using devices (physical, emotional, cognitive)
- Take in feedback from others
- Practice balance between digital engagement and being device free
- Maintain live connections (family, friends, professional colleagues, service_providers, etc.)
- Engage with the physical world
- Connect with nature (not virtual nature)
- Practice self-care (sleep, nutrition, exercise)



How to Optimize Digital Engagement

Use technology to:

- Track your use
- Help you achieve balance
- Connect more
- Enhance your environment
- Increase awareness of self/others/environment
- Improve your physical health
 - Sleep aids
 - Exercise programs
 - Standing desks/Treadmills
 - Nutritional programs
 - Healthy recipes
- Be more creative (drawing, music, dance programs)
- Identify aspirations
- Savor positive experiences (videos, photos)
- Facilitate your goals
- Make dreams come true