

DIGITAL DETOX FOR MENTAL WELLNESS

By

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Abstract

We live in a digital world, whether it's for news, entertainment, work, or communication digital device is involved. We are never more than a click away from being in touch with family, friends, or work. The purpose of a digital detox is to allow ourselves time to experience real life without distractions. It's a way to reconnect with individuals personally rather than through a screen and take time to de-stress and step away from all that connectedness. This paper outlines the importance of digital detox and suggests practical guidelines on implementation for mental wellness.

Keywords: *digital world, digital detox, mental wellness.*

Introduction

The more use of information technology has a pervasive impact on society, including the world of work and its boundaries. Individual professionals, and knowledge workers in particular, are exposed to digital devices during the majority of their working hours (Orlikowski and Scott 2016). In fact, using information technology can lead to technostress, which is defined as “any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts,

behaviors, or body physiology that is caused either directly or indirectly by technology” (Weil and Rosen 1997). Experts suggests that adults should limit screen time to less than two hours per day. It is estimated that Indian adult spends about 6 hours with the screen, which is 25% of an individual's life span (Sanareddy, 2024). According to a study conducted in 2019, 86 percent of participants claimed that the inability to switch off devices after regular working hours has a negative effect on employee

wellbeing (Stewart, 2020). The result is a personal feeling of being overwhelmed by communication content and interpersonal online connections, which negatively affects work and private life alike (Gui and Bu'chi 2019). To counteract technostress and its negative consequences on individual well-being and productivity, the notion of "digital detox" has found its way into popular culture.

The Concept of 'Digital Detox'

Digital detox is defined as a "period of time during which a person refrains from using their electronic devices, such as smartphones, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019). The term 'detox' itself describes "a process or period of time in which one abstains from or rids the body of toxic or unhealthy substances" (Oxford Languages 2021). The term was introduced for the first time around 2012 (Felix and Dean, 2012). In medicine, the scientific grounding for detoxification is controversial – it can rather be seen as a consumer buzz word in conjunction with healthcare

products (Cohen, 2007). In the digital context, however, the effectiveness of detox measures is currently being scrutinized. Other terms like "digital diet" or "media diet" (Andersen et al. 2016) revolve around the same phenomenon as digital detox, which complicates consensus building.

Health Benefits of a Digital Detox

Health benefits one can reap by following digital detox are:

A digital detox may help boost your mental health: People who spend a lot of time on social media and online have less time for in-person interactions, which may negatively affect their mental health. Limiting social media use may lower your stress level and boost your self-image.

A digital detox may help you get better sleep: Technology can keep you from getting restful sleep. At night, your brain makes high levels of the sleep hormone melatonin so you can fall asleep. During the day, blue light from the sun tells your brain to lessen melatonin production to help you stay alert. Digital screens, like your smartphone or tablet, also emit blue

light. When you stare at your phone at night, your brain thinks it's daytime and makes less melatonin. Less melatonin can cause you to have trouble falling asleep. Excessive social media use was linked to poor sleep quality and negative mental health outcomes in teenagers and young adults. Lack of sleep can negatively affect your mental health and cause long-term health conditions, like diabetes or heart disease. A digital detox — like avoiding electronic screens 1 to 2 hours before bed — may help you sleep better.

A digital detox may reduce digital eye strain: Dry eyes and blurry vision after scrolling, posting, and liking for hours and neck pain after a long day's work on your computer, these may be symptoms of digital eye strain caused by staring at a digital screen for extended periods. A digital detox can give your eyes a much-needed break. Taking a tech break may also prevent neck pain caused by hunching over and looking down at a mobile device for a long time.

A digital detox may help you build stronger social bonds: People who constantly check their emails or social

media accounts reported feeling disconnected from their family even when they were together. Some people had improved mental well-being and greater social connectedness after unplugging from social media. Digital gadgets can take a toll on relationships. Getting rid of device use at dinner or when in the presence of your loved ones is all part of digital detoxing that can lead to stronger family bonding.

Tips on How to do a Digital Detox?

- *Make a plan:* Figure out what activities you need to pause. It may help to write down your digital detox plan. Think about why you want to digital detox and what your goals are. Do you need a break from a specific social media platform or all social media?
- *Start slow:* We can slowly cut short the nighttime phone use or trying a social media-free half day. Remember to set a habit and stick to it.
- *Set time limits:* Bound your time to 1 hour per day or have screen-free mealtimes. Make your limits practical but meaningful.

- *Have an accountability partner:* Choose to announce your digital detox challenge online or enlist the help of a friend for support.
- *Remove distractions:* Come out of the attraction to check by muting notifications, charging your phone outside your bedroom, or turning devices off.
- *Try a digital detox app:* It may sound strange to use an app to disconnect from other apps. But digital detox apps help set goals, limit screen usage, or create block lists. To find an app, search your smart device app store using the terms “digital detox app.”

Digital Detox and Mental Wellness

We all use technology constantly, and therefore it can be hard to always to understand the difference between having a problem or not. If your screen time hamper your daily functioning, sleep, or general well-being, or if you feel a sense of burnout, then is time to plan a digital detox. The following mental wellness happens with your brain and body when you cut off from your digital life. Using digital detox

makes both mental and physical stronger. It improves brain concentration, reduce the stress level. Digital detox reduces the level of temptation and increase the level of socialization. It regulates your emotions and control our own actions. Moreover, this detox helps you to have a balanced tech-life to live fuller and happier.

Conclusion

It is an unquestionable fact that digital devices have their upsides and they can enhance efficiency, convenience and communication. However, the period of time we spend online leads to reduce time for real-world activities we enjoy, spending time with our loved ones, which in turn makes our relationships suffer. Smartphones, tablets and wireless give us the freedom to stay plugged in all the time wherever we are. This is the real reason why Digital Detox has become increasingly popular. Finding the right time and space for regular tech-detox is important for people of all ages particularly children and teens as their minds are still developing as they are having more chances to suffer the

negative effects of technology on the body and nervous system.

So, it is essential to put down your phone and pick up your life and enjoy

the real life situations around you. "Digital Wellbeing is about crafting and maintaining a healthy relationship with technology."

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