

Is It Time for a Social-Media "Detox"?

The average person spends one hour and 40 minutes per day on social media. That staggering amount of time stacks up to almost 13 hours per week spent in the digital world. While platforms like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook can be great for staying in touch, it's probably time for a social media "detox" when you start to feel bad about your own life, find yourself endlessly scrolling, comparing your life to others, or hoping for more likes and comments on the things you post.

Where to begin? **Start by unfollowing or unfriending those who make you unhappy** – or as Marie Kondo would suggest – those who do not "spark joy." If every time you log in and someone you follow or are "friends" with is posting something that stresses you out, remove

them from your digital life. Your Instagram, for example, should be a place where you go to seek creative inspiration, share images that make you happy, or follow those whom you love, not feel bad or guilty because you're not flying around the world on a private jet.

Secondly, **set a limit for time spent on social media.** Have you ever been at a dinner table where everyone is on their phone? Or when you and your partner are together, do you find you are on your phones rather than connecting? When everyone is hyper-connected to everything 24/7, it can be difficult to maintain a healthy distance from it. But it is imperative to your mental health that you do.

A recent study found after surveying young adults who use social media that social media notably increases the incidence of anxiety and depression. In fact, the researchers saw that users who frequently checked their accounts had a more than twice as high risk of depression than their less-social media-oriented peers.

Most phones have settings where you can monitor and limit your own social media access. So, whether that's 10 minutes or two hours per day, consider limiting your time online by adjusting your settings so you can be present in your real life. An additional option would be to remove the apps from your phone, such as Facebook, and only access the site when you're on a computer.

Thirdly, if you've been feeling highly anxious, stressed or depressed, this is a good time to take a social-media detox. Whether you **take a week away or delete your accounts altogether**, it can only benefit your mental health. Challenge yourself to use that hour and 40 minutes a day to do something you love or get back into a hobby you've abandoned or never tried. You might just find that by doing a social-media "detox" you feel better and more connected to real life.

"9 Positive Benefits of a Social Media Detox," Holly Chavez, lifehack.org, accessed Dec. 5, 2019.

"Is It Time You Went On A Social Media Detox?" Maria Cohut, medicalnewstoday.com, April 13, 2018.

Tech-Free Activities to Do This Winter



Technology is tied to almost all aspects of our lives these days, but too much screen time is not good for anyone. Try rediscovering old pastimes, creating new memories and exploring activities with your friends and family – without the use of technology (except for the exception of using as a resource).

- Volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Look for open swim options at your local community center.
- Go bowling.
- Check out your local community theater for affordable entertainment.
- Create a project/build something together. Search for "DIY" projects on Pinterest.

- Play board games. Classic games can be entertaining for the entire family and great for bonding.



- Do art – get as messy and as creative as you want! You might also try snow painting or salt painting (use glue to create a design and use salt like you might glitter and apply paint atop, if you wish).
- Do a science experiment – these are fun for all ages and only require a quick search online. There are several books with ideas for different age groups, too.
- Have a family room campout – include as many themed activities you like.
- Make a new recipe together as a family.

The more involved children are with cooking, the more likely they will try new foods.



How You Can Be a **BETTER FRIEND**



FIRST, DIFFERENTIATE ACTIVE FROM PASSIVE FRIENDS

Categorizing your friends as active relationships (close connections you see often) or passive relationships (newer connections you see less frequently) will give you more time to prioritize the friends that mean the most to you. And when you nurture your active relationships, this will allow you to allocate most of your energy and time to maintaining your established friendships versus your weak ties. You can also work on strengthening your weak ties (those passive relationships), which will provide networking opportunities and make you feel more connected to other social groups.

CREATE TIME FOR FRIENDS

It's important to give your friends time and attention (it's rewarding for both parties). Some suggestions include: scheduling friend dates on your calendar; taking five minutes to call or FaceTime a friend; starting an annual or monthly tradition so you can meet your friends regularly, and exercising or taking a class with a friend, which is a great way to nurture your hobbies and your friends at the same time and as a bonus for both of you, it can be fun and healthy!

MAKE SMALL GESTURES

Small gestures can make a momentous difference! They can help show your friends you are thinking about them and can go a long way toward nurturing relationships that may not always get as much one-on-one time as you'd both prefer. Some suggestions

include: texting a photo, bringing home treats from travels, sharing a song, video, book or article you think they would find intriguing (based on your knowledge of their interests), feeding your friends, or just showing up for the milestones, such as weddings, graduations, birthdays, etc.

REALLY LISTEN TO YOUR FRIENDS

When you ask a friend a question (such as "How are you?"), really listen to the answer. Maintain eye contact, stay present and show that you're interested in what they have to say. Repeat what you hear. When you summarize and repeat thoughts back to someone, it shows them you are really hearing them. Keep the focus on them. Don't shift the focus of the conversation to your situation and feelings. Lastly, try brainstorming with your friend to find solutions rather than jumping in with advice.

SHOW YOUR TRUE COLORS

Numerous studies show we form deeper connections with friends when we are willing to be vulnerable and venture into more personal territory in our conversations by revealing our opinions and feelings rather than sticking to basic facts about our lives. Ask yourself how much you've revealed to your friend and how much they've revealed to you. Knowing that self-disclosure fosters closeness, make it a priority, especially if you feel like a friendship lacks true connection.

"How to Be a Better Friend," Tara Parker-Pope, nytimes.com, accessed Dec. 3, 2019.