

# DIGITAL DETOX



The key to staying healthy in our hyperconnected world is adopting sustainable habits around the way we use tech. There's no denying we're more plugged in than ever before. Sure, this level of connectedness has benefits—it's simple to stay in touch with friends and family; you can express yourself on social media; multitasking is easier—but there are also some pretty serious drawbacks.

## DIGITAL USAGE

Mobiles phone where first come onto the market in 1973, although the phone was the size of a book. As technology has developed from the Nokia to the first Apple iPhone to the iPad, our usage of phones and screens have increased from zero to consuming our day and night. Today, the average person spends 5.5 hours on a screen, with Generation Z spending 7.3 hours a day on a screen.



the average Aussie spends

**5.67**  
**hours**

a day on their phone

Smartphone owners unlock their phones an average of

**150x**  
per day

## THE DISTRACTION CHAIN REACTION

The average time people use their phone each time they pick it up is 85 seconds. People pick up their phone when there is a notification from their social media, email or one of the countless apps that demand attention. That could be over 3.5 hours a day. You are just looking at your notifications!



### A 2022 Australian phone usage survey showed that:

- 48% experienced anxiety if they leave their phone at home
- 67% say they find themselves scrolling mindlessly throughout the day
- 75% sleep with their phone next to them
- 42.5% say they've never gone 24 hours without their phone
- 64% check their phone while streaming a movie or TV show
- 19% say they check their phone while driving
- 53% say they wouldn't be able to continue their day-to-day life if they lost their smartphone

**one-fifth**

of people say technology is a source of stress.

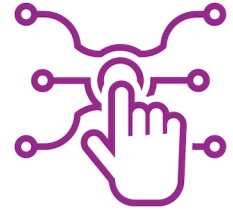
## EFFECTS OF SCREEN TIME

Is screen time definitely bad for you? In a word, no! In many ways, technology has made our lives easier and more exciting, and that is a good thing, according to the *Australian Government's eSafety Commissioner*.

Technology can enhance people's opportunities to play, express themselves, learn and connect with others. Video games can also improve cognitive abilities, including providing problem-solving and logical thinking opportunities, and improve hand-eye coordination and decision-making. So it's obvious there are some benefits to using some of the technology at our fingertips, but there can be downsides.

**56%**

of people say they couldn't last a day without their phone



### PHYSICAL

**Digital eye strain** - Prolonged screen time can cause digital eye strain, which includes symptoms such as dry eyes, headaches, and blurry vision.

**Neck and shoulder pain** - Poor posture while using digital devices can cause neck and shoulder pain, also known as "tech neck."

**Sleep problems** - Exposure to blue light emitted by screens can disrupt the body's natural sleep-wake cycle, making it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep.

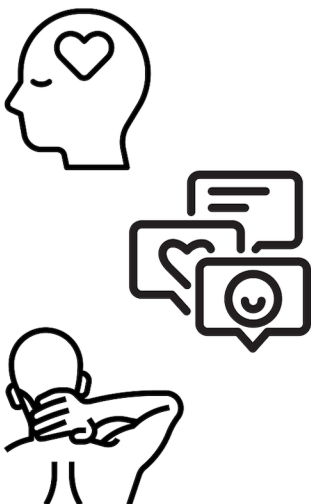
### MENTAL

**Memory issues** - Research has shown that excessive screen time may impair memory and cognitive function, particularly in children and adolescents.

**Less social skills** - Spending too much time on screens can limit opportunities for social interaction, which can hinder the development of social skills, especially in children and teenagers.

**Anxiety and depression** - Studies have linked excessive screen time with increased levels of anxiety and depression.

## What is the evidence on the effects of excessive screen time?



- According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, "excessive screen time can lead to poor health and developmental outcomes". However, the evidence for the bad outcomes that are claimed (such as effects on weight, development and well-being) is far from settled.
- It's difficult to measure the effects of screen time on children's development because there are so many variables at play. Not only does the type of activity matter (you can do lots of things on the internet), but how much of the effect is simply due to sitting, rather than running around outside?
- There's one type of online activity, and its effect, that's of particular concern to many people: social media use and mental health. Those spending six hours or more per day watching screens had a higher risk for depression, and [this study](#) found that limiting social media use to 30 minutes per day lead to a "significant improvement in well-being."

## DIGITAL DETOX TIPS

Experts say adults should limit screen time outside of work to less than two hours per day. Any time beyond that which you would typically spend on screens should instead be spent participating in physical activity. This might not be feasible immediately, but there's still a lot people can do to try to reduce this down.



### RECRUIT A FRIEND

Having a friend to encourage you, distract you and motivate you to use less technology will help keep you accountable and be more successful.



### MAKE INCREMENTAL RULES

'No internet at mealtimes' might be a rule worth keeping, and it is modest enough to be achievable. Paying attention to the present will allow you to assess your thoughts and emotions appropriately.



### TURN SCREEN TIME INTO OUTDOOR TIME

You can find a block of time that you would typically be in front of a screen and explore outside. You can restart an old hobby, visit a park or beach, or leisurely drive. Use this time in the real world to reconnect with your friends, family and yourself.



### TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications are messages from apps that appear on your screen to alert you of new activity. This triggers you to look at your phone and, more likely than not, spend additional time on your phone beyond checking what the notification is.



### SET A TIMER

Use a timer on your phone, the microwave, or an old-fashioned egg timer when you are watching television or using a tablet. When the timer goes off, turn off the device and make an effort to move your body—go for a walk, clean a room or try an at-home workout.



### NO PHONE IN THE BEDROOM

Many people fall prey to scrolling their phone in bed at night or when they first wake up in the morning. This interferes with your sleep and can significantly add to your daily screen time. Use an alarm clock to wake up each morning and leave your phone on a small table outside your bedroom door each night.

# MINDFULNESS

The main difference between mindfulness and mindlessness is that mindfulness is a deliberate choice to focus on the present moment. In contrast, mindlessness is a state of autopilot in which you're not paying attention, and your thoughts have drifted somewhere else.

Some key ways that you can be more mindful include:

1. Be aware of social media use
2. Be present and mindful
3. Be proactive with your relaxation and calm



**the oldest written evidence of meditation possibly dates as far back as 5000 BCE.**

## BE AWARE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Mindfulness in the social media age may look different for each of us, but it starts with being aware of your social media use. This includes being present and tracking use.



While social media is a great way to capture special times, it doesn't replace them. Choose to be present in the moment instead of taking videos and photos and instantly sharing with the world.

It is also important to be very aware of your screen time. For Android, open the Settings app and scroll down to Digital Wellbeing & Parental controls. For Apple, go into Settings then Screen Time. You will be able to turn on screen time notification settings, set limits, and schedule downtime.

## BE PRESENT AND MINDFUL

Do you walk around looking down at your phone? Are your kids playing in front of you and you miss them being silly and laughing.

Be present during the big and small moments in life. Be aware of the taste, smell and textures of foods, to music and sounds, and have connection to the people around us.

## BE PROACTIVE WITH YOUR RELAXATION AND TIME FOR "YOU"

Finding a sense of peace and calm in our day-to-day lives can be difficult. Relaxation techniques can help to relax the mind and body and also manage some of the symptoms of bad mental health days.

There are many types of relaxation, including breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, visualisation, meditation, mindfulness, sleep stories and gentle physical activities such as yoga and Tai Chi.

### Where to find more information and tools

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/relaxation-exercises>

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/guided-meditation>

<https://www.calm.com/mindfulness>



## COSMIC YOGA

Got kids, grandkids, nieces or nephews? Try cosmic yoga with them! These 15 minute free videos promote movement, relaxation and lots and lots of laughs. <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/>

