

Conquer Your Digital Addiction

Mobile devices have revolutionized the way we communicate and access information. Yet as we constantly communicate with others via social media sites and cellphone apps, it sometimes comes at the expense of face-to-face interactions, which are so crucial to establishing and maintaining meaningful personal relationships. Below are five tips to help you enjoy your favorite gadgets without sacrificing quality time with the people you care about most.

Free up your hands. Licensed clinical social worker and relationship therapist Rhonda Milrad says most of us are more deeply connected to our mobile devices than we realize. In fact, according to a recent study by Deloitte, people in the United States collectively check their smartphones more than 9 billion times per day.¹ To truly unplug, you have to eliminate all temptation. “The phone has to be turned off and put in a place where you cannot see or hear it,” Milrad says. “Only then are you free to be more mindfully present to yourself, your surroundings, and others.”

Physically separating from your mobile device also frees you to engage in important nonverbal activities that nurture human connection. A 2015 study² published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science* indicates that touch-related gestures strengthen the bond and feelings of closeness between couples. Similar studies indicate that touching can improve and protect adult relationships — romantic and otherwise.

Schedule a quitting time for devices. “It’s impossible to bond with the people who are in the room with you when your attention is elsewhere,” says Milrad. “Meaningful connections at the dinner table cannot happen when everyone is busy checking their phones.” To help promote healthier family dynamics, set rules for when technology is off-limits in the house. Pick a common area, such as a box or basket, where all family members must leave their digital gadgets during the designated tech-free timespan.

Change your activities. If you’re worried about your ability to resist the lure of your cellphone, make more action-oriented plans with your friends, like taking a walk or learning a new activity together. This will help you be more mindful of your environment and focused on the people around you.

Give yourself permission to disconnect. Addicted to your mobile device because you have a job where it’s the norm to respond to email and text messages outside of business hours? Life coach Amy Hall says you may need to give yourself permission to disconnect to feel comfortable separating from technology. “We experience the most trouble disconnecting on our days off because we have an impulse to stay connected but feel a pull to make the most of our weekends,” she says. “The paradox can be quite anxiety-inducing.”

When her clients struggle with the idea of disconnecting because of work demands, Hall suggests they schedule 30 minutes on Sunday mornings to comb through email for any emergencies or fires to put out, write a to-do list for the week ahead, and make specific short- and long-term goals. Tending to pressing business (briefly) and outlining what the week ahead will entail can relieve the sense of anxiety that powering down often presents.

Create a new morning ritual devoid of electronics. Hall says that you're sending yourself a signal that electronics will rule your day if you reach for the phone first thing. "Take time for yourself in the morning: meditate, have a screenless breakfast as a family, set positive intentions for your day before you ever glance at a screen," she says. Although your mobile device may give you access to vital information, news, and tools, you're in charge of where you place your attention.

¹<http://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/global-mobile-consumer-survey-us-edition.html> (page 9 of report)

²<http://spp.sagepub.com/content/6/7/831.abstract>

This article was written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors and provided courtesy of David M. Gustin, AAMS®, Vice President-Investments in Melville, N.Y. at 631-753-4533

Investments in securities and insurance products are: NOT FDIC-INSURED/NOT BANK-GUARANTEED/MAY LOSE VALUE

Wells Fargo Advisors is a trade name used by Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC, Member SIPC, a registered broker-dealer and non-bank affiliate of Wells Fargo & Company.

© 2018 Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC. All rights reserved.