

Digital Detoxing

Cellphones, computers, tablets. All of these are important tools. But technology can seep into every moment of your life and take over. Do you need to step away from email or give your smartphone a rest from time to time? Digital detoxing is becoming increasingly popular as a response to tech overload. Discover the benefits of setting limits around technology and strategies for doing so, courtesy of April Durrett, IDEA contributing editor and writer in Sunnyvale, California.

Benefits of Tech Breaks

Face it: Technology can be distracting. “We need to [take tech breaks] for health and productivity reasons,” explains Frances Booth, author of *The Distraction Trap: How to Focus in a Digital World* (Pearson 2013). “Many people are stressed, overwhelmed by information overload, and struggling with demands to be constantly connected. We need to achieve a better balance.”

Physical benefits. Breaks from technology are good for your body. “Take regular breaks to help avoid some of the chronic musculoskeletal changes that can accompany the types of postures and body positions associated with using PCs, smartphones and handheld computer devices,” says Mary Bratcher, MA, DipLC, life coach and program coordinator for The BioMechanics Method corrective exercise education courses, in San Diego.

Mental benefits. Making time away from technology can bring joy and purpose. “Tech breaks help me stay focused on what I want to do instead of what the world thinks I should be doing,” says Beverly Hosford, fitness professional and educator in Bozeman, Montana. “I’m a better friend, family member and partner without technology because I can focus on the people I love without interruptions.”

Strategies to Try

So how do you break free from your tech devices? Consider these ideas:

Turn off alerts. “Turning off new email and text alerts can help keep you on track with not checking email/phones all the time,” says Bratcher.

Separate home and work technology. Bratcher advises having separate phones for work and personal use and turning off your work phone at the close of business each day. Likewise, she encourages creating different email accounts for work and personal correspondence and limiting the number of times you check email.

Set limits and put important tasks first. “I sometimes will avoid technology until I get the important tasks done in the morning,” Hosford says. “It’s amazing how much you can get done when you are addressing important tasks instead of urgent ones that ‘seem important.’”

Eschew tech at night. Sheree King, owner of Spice Health & Fitness in Hobart, Australia, feels that sleep is so important that she keeps her cellphone out of her bedroom. "Having the phone where I can't hear it is a way to get some downtime," she says. "I don't feel any call or text is important enough for me to answer late at night. I check messages first thing in the morning to see if any staff are sick or if clients can't turn up."

A No-Tech Sunday

You can also deliberately avoid technology for a set period of time, such as an entire day. Some people are finding that saying no to digital devices every Sunday helps them find work-life balance.

For example, last year Carol Crincoli, owner of Pure Pilates in Providence, New Jersey, started unplugging on Sundays. "My husband and I needed to set some boundaries for the time we spend on our careers," she explains. "When text and emails come through our phones, we feel compelled to respond, and sometimes we get consumed by the messages. We try to limit responses on Saturdays and now do nothing on Sundays."

Gina Howe, co-owner of Core Essentials Fitness in Lewis Center, Ohio, also unplugs on Sundays. "Sundays are my only day off," she says. "I prioritize that as family day. I also prep foods on Sundays, which is essential for me due to my crazy weekday schedule. A tech-free Sunday helps me step away, so I don't risk burnout as much, which makes me better at what I do." [Fitness Journal, Volume 13, Issue 5](#)

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