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#Unplug: The Complete, Printable Guide

Step-by-step instructions for ditching your devices and navigating the world without an Internet connection.



BY JESSICA HULLINGER

LONG READ

So you need to unplug. You're feeling overwhelmed by your gadgets—connected to your email list but not to your personal life. It's time to take a break. It is precisely for times like these that we've created this guide to unplugging. These step-by-step instructions will walk you through the difficult (but rewarding!) process of unplugging, from deciding when to unplug to informing your friends and coworkers that you'll be offline for a while to avoiding the biggest temptations to plug back in. Here you'll find advice from digital detoxing experts, business leaders, and our readers, whom we asked to use the [#unplug](#) hashtag to submit their best methods for logging off.

We encourage you to [click here to print these pages](#), and when you find yourself reaching for your phone, reach for this guide instead for tips on how to overcome the urge to use your devices. And when you're ready to rejoin the digital world, come to [FastCompany.com](#), and we'll help you find the most seamless way to do so.



When Is The Best Time To Unplug?

Take a vacation: Comedian, author, and 2011 Shorty Award winner for Foursquare Mayor of the Year Baratunde Thurston recently went offline for 25 days, and [lived to tell the tale](#). “I considered fleeing to a remote island for a few weeks, but I realized I wasn’t craving physical escape,” Thurston writes. “I didn’t actually want to be alone. I just wanted to be mentally free of obligations, most of which asserted themselves in some digital fashion.” To do this effectively, he would have to take some time off work. So he identified a time when his work cycle was at a natural lull: Christmas. “With the exception of Mr. Scrooge, everyone slows down during the holidays, and so would I.”

Need The Cheat Sheet? [Check Out Cultivated Wit’s 6 Steps To #Unplug](#)

“Travel to a place where absence of wireless reception and Wi-Fi makes it impossible to connect. Life miraculously continues.” —[Elena Sirpolaidis \(@elenasirpo\)](#)

“Deactivate Facebook during vacation and set a rule to shop locally.” —[Blair Knobel \(@lbknobel\)](#)

Carson Tate, managing partner of [Working Simply](#), recently shared a bunch of tips with *Fast Company*: Get over yourself and prioritize some time off; think: “What’s the worst that could happen?”

If vacation isn’t an option for you, here are a few other times that make for great times to unplug:

Take the weekend: “I think Saturday afternoon is pretty much the best time to unplug . . . I find keeping the weekends quiet is critical.” —Gina Bianchini, founder & CEO at [Mightybell](#)

“When going away for a weekend, don’t bring the charger. You’ll be forced to conserve battery for only very important emails.” —[Frank Gu \(@ugknarf\)](#)

Take a weekday: “I personally started unplugging one day a week, I’ve done it now for almost three years with my family, and it’s changed my life.” —[Tiffany Shlain](#), digital filmmaker and founder of the Webby Awards

Take the morning: Superlative executives [tend to get up super early](#) to work out, read, and otherwise [get a jump on the day](#). If you have an iPhone, extend the do-not-disturb time past your wake-up to add in some quiet time.

“Do not bring your cell phone into the bedroom,” says Levi Felix, founder of [Digital Detox](#), a company that offers tech-free retreats. “When you bring a cell phone into your bed, you’re bringing the whole world with you. You are on call. You’re basically a surgeon, available to anyone and everyone.”

Take the afternoon: A recent study showed that [2:55 p.m. is the point in the day when productivity levels are at their lowest](#). Why not take that time to step away from the office and [defray your brain](#)? A study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* suggests green spaces lessen “brain fatigue”—the feeling of being distracted, forgetful, and flighty. So go for a walk around the park.

Take the evening: “I attempt to unplug every weeknight around 10:30 (work permitting). I typically go to bed at midnight, so it allows me an hour and a half of ‘me’ time before I go to bed. It’s not easy, and there are always distractions. Our brains need to detach themselves from digital devices to be able to have sound sleep at night. Yes, you may miss an email but your long-term health will benefit from it.” —Jordan McComb, Junior Production Designer, SET, LLC

Take mealtime: “No phones at the dinner table at home. This is time we have to connect with each other. Family time is family time. I try, as much as possible, to put the phone away when we’re doing family activities and be actively engaged with my wife and son when we’re together.” —[Gerald Brady](#), managing director, Silicon Valley Bank

I considered fleeing to a remote island for a few weeks, but I realized I wasn’t craving physical escape. I didn’t actually want to be alone. I just wanted to be mentally free of obligations, most of which asserted themselves in some digital fashion.

“When I’m having a meal with friends or family, it’s an important time for us to share, connect, and have meaningful conversations.” —[Oliver Kharraz](#), COO and founder of ZocDoc

Take a workout break: “I really believe that unplugging through exercise has allowed me to keep the pace required for an exec role in a tech company.” —[Catherine Courage](#), SVP of Customer Experience, Citrix

Take a minute: “These days, it’s next to impossible to avoid the never-ending stream of email, texts, and push notifications, but it’s so important to me to unplug during personal interactions. Even while sitting in a meeting, at a party or in the middle of a conversation with a friend, I try very hard to avoid it. I don’t let technology take me away from my everyday interactions and experiences . . . from life. —[Ryan Holmes](#), CEO of HootSuite

“I never take my iPhone into meetings . . . It’s important that I give my undivided attention to my colleagues and partners and I expect (and appreciate!) the same respect in return.” —[Ivanka Trump](#)

However long you plan to unplug, start prepping now. Identify a time that works for you, and start making a list of things you’d like to accomplish while you detox.

The Five Biggest Temptations To Replug

But before you #unplug, it’s best to prepare yourself to deal with the questions typically answered by your device, the Web, or an app: How will I get in touch with people if I don’t have my phone? What’s the best way to find a good restaurant without searching Yelp? Where in the hell am I?

It’s at these moments that you will be tempted to use. The good news is that there’s a way to prepare for the urge to re-plug by identifying then remembering what, exactly, you want to #unplug from.

For [his 25-day detox](#), comedian and author Baratunde Thurston didn’t want—or need—to abandon the Internet completely. Not every aspect of digital life was problematic. It’s the Web, not, like, *crack*.

“I love, depend on, and frankly am made a better human being by the convenience of streaming movies, online food ordering, and Google Maps. I did not want to sever ties with friends; in fact, one of my goals was to strengthen relationships with pre-Facebook pals. I wanted to go to lunch, attend holiday parties, and host people for dinner. So I decided I could use my phone for personal calls and texts, and could schedule these encounters with Google Calendar.”

But social media (“including, but not limited to, seeing, reading, downloading, syncing, sending, submitting, posting, pinning, sharing, uploading, updating, commenting, tagging, rating, liking, loving, upvoting, starring, favoriting, bookmarking, plus-oneing, or re-anythinging”) and business activities were prohibited.

To decide what you want to take a break from, first take inventory. “Start by keeping a time log,” suggests [Kimberly Young](#), founder and director at the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery.

“What are the activities you do, and when do you do them? Then once you get that inventory, that in and of itself will probably be enlightening. You can start prioritizing what you can cut out. What is it you really don’t need?”

Then, create a list of things you’d like to accomplish while away, as any mission is best executed when there are goals in mind. “I concocted a wish list of activity for my disconnected time,” [says Thurston](#). “It was a pleasure to contemplate places to visit in New York, books to read, and people with whom I wanted to spend some quality time.”

Once you’ve decided what to give up, and what to do during your #unplug, it’s time to dive in. Here are some of the temptations you should be prepared to deal with, and how to go around them:

1. I’m Bored

Start journaling: “Use a pencil and a pad and write what you’re feeling. Take a moment to be introspective. . . . Why is this a problem? What’s really happening? Do you feel a loss of connection?” —[Kimberly Young](#), founder and director at the Center for Internet Addiction Recovery

Get a hobby (or a pet): “Commit to something outside the office, away from digital responsibilities. I haven’t had a hobby outside of my job for nearly 10 years. So I took a few drastic measures. First, I got a dog. Which I’ve always wanted, but I knew it would force me to get outside, walk, and unplug. Second, I joined my co-worker Amy Azzarito in signing up for adventurous classes like Aerial Silks and skateboarding. It’s hard to work your iPhone when you’re dangling from the air.” —[Grace Bonney](#), founder of Design*Sponge

“I have to get up, turn off the laptop and start playing with my cat. Just wander around and engage in some mindless cat play.” —[Alexis Ohanian](#), Reddit co-founder

“I usually hike, read a book, talk with friends. One day recharges me and feels like a two-week vacation.” —[Jonathan D. Becher](#), chief marketing officer at SAP

“Reading nonfiction books. Even if I’m not captivated by the story, I’m still learning something.” —[Alexis Ohanian](#), Reddit co-founder

make it impossible to plug in. I pack up my computer, phone, and iPad and charge them in my bedroom so I'm not tempted to use them. — [Grace Bonney](#), founder of Design*Sponge

“Intentionally seek places without Wi-Fi reception or even electricity, so you are not tempted to plug in.” — [Yuli Ziv](#), founder and CEO of Style Coalition

“Have a trusted friend, spouse / partner come up with your mobile device passcode for a weekend. Locked out for a few days.” — [@shawnimal](#), *Fast Company* reader

2. The Online World Won't Leave Me Alone

Turn off automatic sync on your phone: You can live without notifications from ESPN, Boing Boing, and Mafia Wars for a few days—a couple of weeks even!

Have a designated email checker: “To ensure an inbox-free vacation, my chief of staff would log in every few days to check that I didn't miss anything urgent such as a family emergency, holiday party invite.” — [Baratunde Thurston](#)

Delay your emails: “I use Boomerang to delay the sending of emails so I can ensure I won't get a response at a time that will force me to jump back into work.” — [Grace Bonney](#), founder of Design*Sponge

“I've made it a policy not to reply to work emails outside of business hours. People are generally pretty annoyed at first, but they get over it. If it's an emergency they learn to call, and apparently nothing is an emergency once you have to bother yourself with a phone call.” — [Brian Voll](#), director of product development at Avant Garde Information Solutions

“Support the 24-hour email response rule for your own mental health and the health of your colleagues, clients, and friends. Unless there is an emergency, no email has to be replied to immediately.” — [Yuli Ziv](#), founder and CEO of Style Coalition

3. I'm Lost

One of the main things we use our devices for is navigation. It's easy to leave the house with nothing more than a general sense of where you're headed, and look up the actual address when you get closer. But without a maps app, what's a lost traveler to do? You have a few options:

Get a map of your area: You should have one anyway. “I try to print out maps when we're going places,” says [Tiffany Shlain](#), digital filmmaker and founder of the Webby Awards

“Before you go on this detox, research what's going on in your neighborhood or city,” says Levi Felix. “Write down the busses or directions of places you need to go.”

Ask for directions: Overcome your fear of speaking to strangers and start asking for directions. Better yet, ask for recommendations on local places to frequent, such as restaurants. Thurston did this:

“Since I couldn't query my online network for local dining and culture options, my massage therapist became my recommendation engine. She told me of several restaurants and sites to check out. She transmitted this data by writing down the names on a piece of paper. . . . For lunch I frequented Chuko, where the server recommended the pork belly ramen. This was not the Yelp.com server, mind you, but a human server who proclaimed, ‘Try the pork-belly ramen.’ What an algorithm.”

Give yourself a time cushion: If you get lost, you'll have sufficient enough time to ask for help.

4. I Have A Question For Google

When you have a question that needs answering, resist the urge to rely on Google by “doing something absurd like digging up a print encyclopedia or rewarding the person who guesses the answer without looking it up (when you confirm later).” — [Anna Sternoff](#), creative strategist

5. I Miss Sharing

When we share our experiences on social media that generate reactions from our connections, our brains release [chemicals that make us feel validated](#). This is the basis of habit—and it's why we are so tempted to share our experiences on Facebook, Instagram, etc. Here's how to ease the withdrawal symptoms during your time away from the digital world:

Share with the people around you: During his time offline, Thurston walked past a whole pig stuffed into a plastic bag on the sidewalk, which he was tempted to share with the world. “Twenty-four hours earlier, I would have Instagrammed this image, along with a suitably witty comment; instead I saved my snapshot for later viewing by people physically close enough to see my phone.”

“Whenever I get the urge to do something online, I find its counterpart in real life and do it. It’s all about the emotion and feeling you get from being ‘plugged.’ For example, if I felt like I need to post a photo on Instagram, I show it to my colleagues and friends. If I want to share info (personal or general knowledge), I call a friend or share it with colleagues. And so forth. Mainly, I find something around me that would give me a similar feeling and emotion to the one I get from the digital life or interactions.” —[Alanoud AlMadhi](#), projects analyst

“The next time you’re reaching for your device mid-conversation, ask yourself what you’re looking for. Take a moment to assess whether what’s on that screen is as important as the connection you’re making in person. Undivided attention has become a rare gift, which means it’s powerful and appreciated when it’s given genuinely.” —[Jillian Davis](#), experience planner at creative agency mono

“I need to remind myself if I’m on my phone I might be missing my actual life. Look at the people right around me.” —[Gia Medeiros](#), marketing and organizational catalyst

“Relax! If a major event happens, someone around you with a mobile device will let you know.” —[@markgullett](#), *Fast Company* reader.

How To Broadcast Your Plan To Unplug

When it comes to stepping away from our digital life for an extended amount of time, “the biggest reason people are unsuccessful is because they’re afraid people will try to get ahold of them,” says Levi Felix of Digital Detox retreats. To ease this fear of missing out (FOMO), “we make sure people tell anyone who might be trying to get ahold of them in advance.”

For his personal [digital unplug](#), Baratunde Thurston went to great lengths to alert his friends and colleagues he’d be going offline. This was, he discovered, harder than it sounds, particularly when it comes to social media connections.

“As much as we all gripe about email, it is designed to be turned off. Email comes with the vacation-message feature that alerts senders to the fact that we are not available. . . . Social media services, however, are not interested in making absence easy.”



OFFLINE
THRU JAN 7.
EXPECT NO
REPLIES

So after making a series of loud social media announcements about his upcoming departure from the digital world, Thurston changed his profile photos to read “OFFLINE THROUGH JAN 7, 2013. EXPECT NO REPLIES.” “In an era of high-definition, handheld, multiparty, and free wireless video chat, my best option was essentially a smoke signal,” he writes.

Here are some other tips from Thurston about how to let people know you’ll be unreachable:

Schedule your unplug time: “Figure out when you can take a real break. If you want a true digital detox, two weeks is far better than one,” Thurston says. If you can’t take two weeks away, try unplugging for the weekend or even once a week. [Here are a few other options.](#)

Tell your colleagues: “A month before you leave, make sure that your key coworkers know that you’ll be truly unavailable. This gives you time to work out any real problems your absence may create.”

Tell everyone else: “A week before d-day, send an email to a list of those who communicate with you on anything more than an occasional basis, alerting them to your departure. Make it clear to them that this is serious—no one will believe you’re really capable of ditching the digital life.”

Set your away message for email: “Your note should be courteous but firm: You will return no emails (though you may choose to leave emergency contact info).”

Manage social networks: “You can’t really turn off Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and so on. So use your home page to establish your absence. Take a photo of a stark message like: I Won’t Be Here Until [date of your return]. Use that as your profile photo.”

Establish emergency exceptions: “There must be some way for people to reach you. Set up a clear system with someone you trust, who can have access to your email and social media.”

Take a deep breath: “Vacate. Completely. It’ll be scary for a day or two. And then it will be great.”

Some other recommendations from our readers on how to alert your friends that you’re unplugging:

“I’m not dead, I’m just tired of tweeting.” —@KarlPawlewicz

“My phone’s dead. I don’t have a charger.’ I take an accidental afternoon-long hiatus and try to stay mentally present.” —@ReginaFlanigan

“By faking your death.” —@DavidAndGoliath

“Those who get it will give you your time, and those who don’t get it will never notice.” —Saurabh Chandrashekhar

Finally, when you’re ready to replug, [visit Fast Company for advice](#) on how to dive back into your stream without feeling like you’re drowning and how to make sure you don’t get in over your head again.

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[Image: Flickr user [Peter Rosbjerg](#)]



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The difference between your online and offline personalities.

 Erika Farrugia Nov 27, 2017 · 3 min read

This blog is a project for Study Unit MCS3953, University of Malta.



Hello again! I'm back with a second blog post. I would like to start off with two questions one could simply ask themselves on an everyday basis .. 'Our habits define who we are, but how true is this for our digital habits?' and 'Are we the same online as offline?'

Your online person or personal brand is how the world perceives you on the internet. Since it is the web, you could technically create an all new personality for yourself (not recommended).

In the early days of the internet, it was probably safe to assume that our online behaviours did not reveal much about our real-world personas. Each online user had the ability to be who ever he or she chose to be. Each individual on the internet could pick and decide which characteristics of themselves were shared with others, which creates an environment where true thoughts and feelings can be expressed.

As the internet began to grow each day and has become such a great importance in our lives, we willingly give up anonymity and also the desire to mask our real identity online. Indeed, online activities are no longer separable from our real lives, but an integral part of it. Social networking changed the role of the internet. On more and more sites, a person's offline identity is connected to their online actions. The majority spend over 30 hours a week online mostly devoted to social networking. Our online identity no longer reflects our true selves, but rather the person that we think friends, family and other people should see.

Even though we are greater than the history of our internet browser, it is most likely that our web searches and web page visits, emails and social media activity carry certain indications of our personality. In addition we can say that our media preferences and what we purchase online also point out elements of our personality. We can say that we have as many personalities as the number of situations we are in. For instance; what will you watch on Netflix, listen to on Spotify, or buy off Ebay?



There are drawbacks to every stance, and hurt that can be caused by those hiding in anonymity can be great, but is it enough to justify permanently linking the online self to the offline self? I would never defend or justify the hateful messages that are tossed around the internet without recourse, but I fear we as people may lose focus on what positives that a separate online self can bring.

An Honest Facebook Movie



An ironic look at Facebook — demonstrates the lack of authenticity that now exists on social networking

I'm sure that every person has a secret that he or she wishes to keep to themselves and not let others know. What the anonymous internet does is give the person the tools to express themselves that is probably locked away in his or her office or bedroom. What a completely linked "anonymous" online and offline self does is force us back into our masks, constantly, 365 days a year. The human face is after all nothing more nor less than a mask. Without the ability to let our true selves breathe, we just become suffocated masses, hoping not to offend a soul, and praying that family, friends, colleagues, and that cute person we met at a party "likes" or "comments" on our post (be it a picture or a status).

We are always very curious to know what people are doing and where people are every second of the day. Nowadays, the majority of teenagers and also us young adults are all the time posting and updating our followers with what we are up to.. for example through Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook. From online statuses, to posting pictures and recently to sending pictures that last 24 hours or even just a few seconds.

So now ask yourself.. Does your online persona match the real "you"?

Until next time,

Erika

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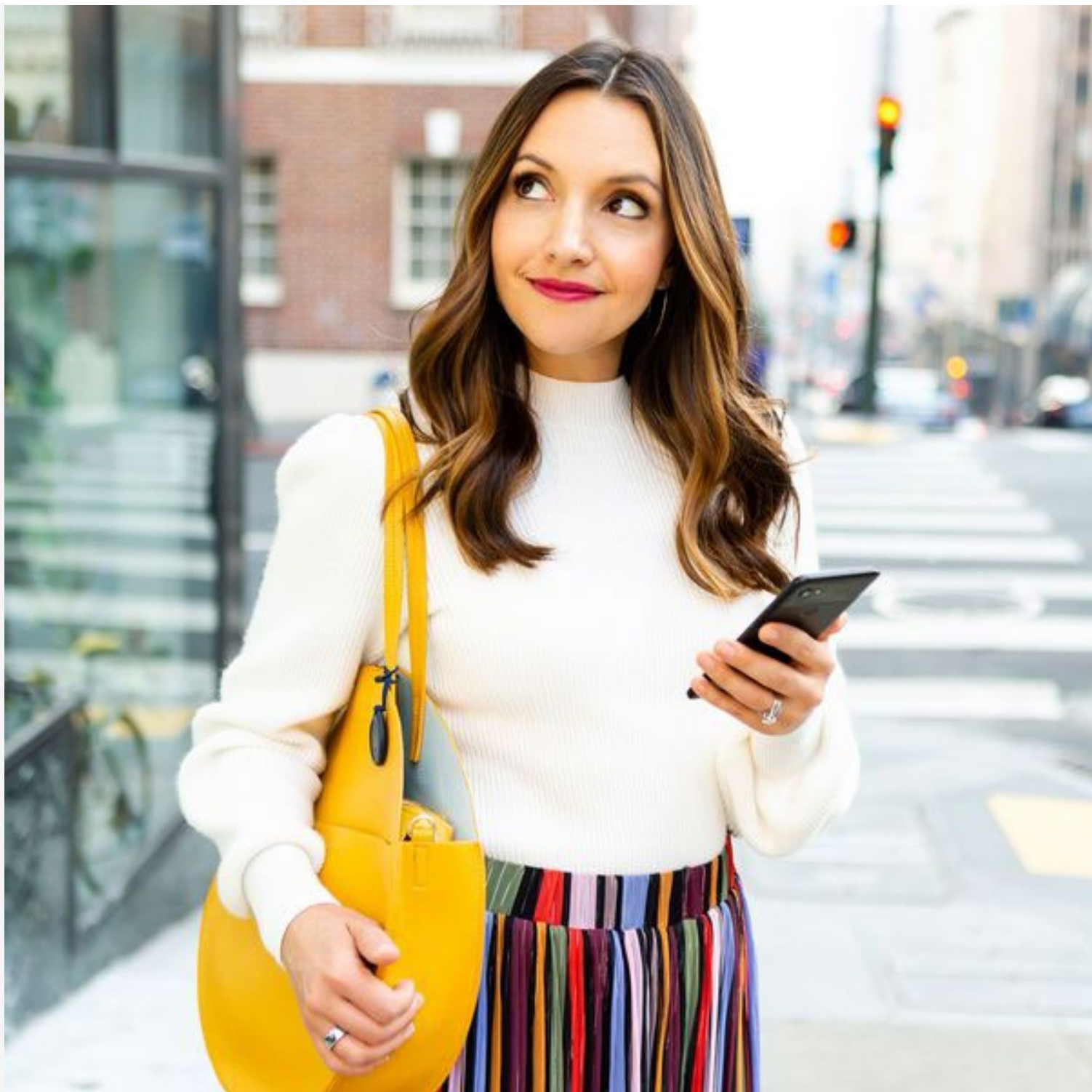
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5 New-ish Technologies Designed to Curb Your Social Media Addiction

Anjelika Temple · Mar 12, 2020





We're all looking for ways to curb our social media addiction and dependency on our phones. From setting specific times in our schedule for falling down an Instagram rabbit hole to turning off all notifications on weekends, many people are trending towards going offline. While it's amazing to have so much information and the ability to connect with everyone you know right in your pocket, it can feel seriously overwhelming. It's impossible to keep up with all the things on the Internet all the time.

The idea of totally unplugging feels luxurious, and almost unreasonable when you have work/kids/friends to check in with.

So, if you're not quite ready to unplug for a whole week, weekend, or month, here are 5 new-ish technologies that are designed to reduce your social media use for the long run.

Tuck Your Devices into Bed, Outside of Your Bedroom

More and more people have a "no phones in bed" rule in their homes, and we are all for it. Arianna Huffington took this idea one step further and manufactured an actual bed (complete with "mattress" and satin comforter) for your devices to rest and recharge overnight.

Dubbed the Phone Bed, this gadget hopes to ritualize the letting go of screens as part of your household's bedtime routine. If the bed vibe isn't for you, this Bamboo Charger Station has a spot for all of your electronics, including your smartwatch and AirPods.

Try an App That Makes You Use Less Apps

That's right. Use your phone to use your phone less. Mind explosion. But for real, there are a few apps that monitor productivity, specific app usage, and even offer ways to help you focus. Our fave is Moment. Described as a wellness app, Moment's goal is to break your screen and social media addiction through small habit tweaks and guided coaching. You can choose between programs like Mini Detox, Better Sleep, Attention Span, and design a plan that suits your needs and goals. With handy checklists that include items like "Stop Sleeping With Your Phone," it's a great option for people who don't just need a break — they need a behavioral change.

Set Usage Limits in Your Phone Settings

Not a brand new thing but one that we're big fans of, most phones now have an option in settings to limit your phone use based on specific apps. So you can say 2 minutes max on Twitter, 10 minutes on Instagram, 5 minutes on Facebook (gotta check in with all your neighborhood/mom/interest groups!), etc — per day, per week, and so on.

Rock a Smart Watch

This might seem a little counterintuitive, since you quite literally have a screen attached to your wrist. As long as you've got social media notifications turned off, your watch can be the minimalist phone you've always dreamed of (and used to own — who else had a pager in the '90s?!).

Shift Your Focus

When it's less about being anti social media and more about focus, we like to turn our attention to getting in the zone. The folks at Brain.fm have created a whole different take on music — instead of being about listening to music and rocking out, it's about using music and sound to help you focus. Created by a collaboration of scientists and musicians, Brain.fm offers music to support you in daily life — from getting more done at work to feeling relaxed at the end of the day to getting better sleep. We love that they describe their product as interior design for your mind.

What tools and tips do you have for reducing your social media use and phone addiction? DM us @britandco to share your insights.

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Anjelika Temple · Oct 19, 2020



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It seems inevitable...

In today's world, we're surrounded by screens. We seem destined to live life behind our computers, our tablets, our smartphones. We get drawn in by Twitter, Facebook, reddit, YouTube, news websites, countless blogs, podcasts, the list goes on and on.

It seems almost like an obligation to take part in this. As if you're not a part of society as a whole if you do not vent your opinion on these public forums and keep yourself updated on the latest ideas, the goings-on of the life of not only your friends, but also people who you're merely vaguely acquainted with, or those you haven't even ever met in person.



Is this how you want to spend your precious time in this world?

You might comment a lot and be able to present your well-thought out opinion, thinking you make a difference in the flow of ideas. In reality, everything you say is quickly forgotten and buried in the untouched archives of the internet, only popping up on the 57th page of Google search results. If you're lucky.

Ask yourself the question: does all of this add real value to your life? Will you look back with pride and joy on your social media use? Our answer is a definite no.

Imagine the alternative...

What could you do with your life if you didn't partake in all this. The hours you spend on Netflix, social media, reading blogs (yes, I'm aware of the irony as I'm writing this, and you're reading this).

You could travel, spend quality time with friends and family. You could write a novel, start a business. You could have more time to study, get better grades, have a better chance at getting your dream job.



Choose life.

Go on dates and meet the love of your life.

Be [less distracted at work](#) and get a promotion, earn more money, maybe get a side hustle to earn some extra money.

Start your very own business, be your own boss, choose your own working hours and work from home. Have more time for your children and see them grow up from close by.

You could have more and better experiences, and create fantastic memories that last a lifetime, instead of merely a minute or two.

In short, you'd have a big chance to live a life that's worthwhile, a chance to make a difference. An amazing life, where, looking back when you're old, you'd have no regrets.

A great life.

Here's how to do it...

There's one simple rule to make this happen: be radical. Cut your screen time to the bare minimum. Don't just stop logging in. Delete your Facebook, Twitter and reddit accounts.. Cancel your Netflix subscription. Get offline.

Now, this seems simple. And it is, in most cases, you just have to click a few buttons.

Is it easy? Absolutely not. When you're looking at that 'delete account button', you're going to feel anxious. All those pictures, comments, and posts are going to be deleted. You're going to be afraid that you lose that connection with hundreds or even thousands of people. You're going to be afraid that you'll become a hermit, a pariah of society.



Maybe the best decision you'll ever make.

Honestly, it's going to take a lot of courage to do this. It will be a tough decision, and once you've made up your mind and pulled the plug, you're going to feel a bit empty.

This was merely the first step.

Now, you have to fill that void. Sure, you'll free up hours of time per day, but that means nothing if you're not going to fill those up with worthwhile experiences. Without something to replace your previous online activity, the temptation to go back to the screen is going to stay with you, eating away at your willpower.

Because of this, you have to plan ahead. Think deeply. What will you do with your free time?

Here's our suggestion: make a plan, at least for the first month, and fill it up with activities. Plan a few activities in the weekend, join a sports club, set a few dates with friends and potential love interests. Go see a movie in the theater. Plan a little trip to Paris. Buy some interesting books for those dead moments when you're at home and there's nothing else to do. Go hiking and enjoy nature. Maybe you could even start writing a book yourself.

Learn a new skill: guitar, programming, cooking, some kind of martial art or another type of sports if you're the peace and love type. You could brew your own beer or start gardening.

The options are limitless.

Your life could be filled with a lot of interesting things to do, activities that will add real value to your life and leave you fulfilled.

Once you manage to do this, you'll truly understand how empty and shallow it was, that time you spent online playing Fortnite with foul-mouthed fifteen year olds.

Be radical

Let me be very clear on this, you have to be radical, and don't leave yourself any wiggle space. Screens are addictive. Just like an alcoholic can't even drink one glass without risking being drawn into a new downward spiral, one hour on Twitter has a large chance of rekindling your internet addiction.

If you really don't want to delete your accounts in one go, then at least deactivate them for a month. [Instead of completely disconnecting, you can try a temporary detox.](#)

Preferably, you'd also get rid of your smartphone and instead get you a mobile phone with only the bare necessities: being able to call people and send texts.



It's time to pull the plug. You can do it.

Now, there's one thing you'll probably won't get around. In this day and age, you'll still need a computer, and you'll still need to go online to do stuff.

It's likely that you have a job that has you glued to a computer screen all day, for one. *(And I'm not suggesting you join the Amish or become a total Luddite.)*

Besides that, you'll have to order books on Amazon and buy airplane tickets for your trip. Manage your business and read your e-mails. And in doing so, of course you risk going down the rabbit hole again. This is where FocusMe comes in. FocusMe allows you to block social media, video games, Netflix, specific websites that you'll likely spend hours on, clicking through until you've wasted another precious day.

So before you go offline, we suggest you [try out our trial version](#), which will help you get through that first month and take the first step to a great life.

To conclude: I'd like to emphasize this again: going offline won't be easy. Especially in the beginning But I do promise that the sacrifice will turn out to be extremely worthwhile. [At the end of the yellow brick road, happiness awaits.](#)

Your life will truly begin. Your life will be great.

All the best,

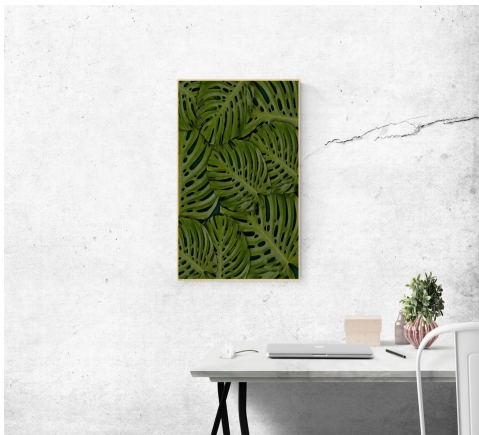
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Unplugged: How to live life offline

JULY 28, 2016 | BY MALAVIKA

Has the internet and social media changed the human experience? Of course it has, but how exactly?

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

I don't even really need to tell you about the benefits of social media, do I? We all know it, we all experience them on a day by day basis, which is part of the reason why it is so addictive.

I love that I can stay in touch with far away friends. I love that the internet makes my world so small.

I love that I can access a fountain of free information – it gives me the ability to learn almost anything I want, from how to play an instrument, to learning a new language, to how to bake an elaborate cake.

I love that whatever ridiculous questions about some specific and strange facet of life I may have, I can ask Google with no shame and no doubt that hundreds others have wondered the exact same thing. **Examples**, lol.

I love that information, knowledge, wisdom, entertainment, art and stories of the human experience can be shared so easily.

....To name a few.

The bad

Of course we also have heard about the bad side of the internet and social media. I think our addiction to it has a number of disadvantages to our personal development, and these are some that I have been contemplating recently.

Unsocial media

The premise of social media is to connect us with the world, and in many ways it does, but it also breeds a false sense of connection. We put less value on cultivating meaningful relationships and instead derive a sense of self worth and satisfaction from the number of followers, or acquaintances we have, and our brief interactions with them by the way of comments, likes, upvotes and downvotes. Meanwhile, in the real world, we ignore the person sitting right in front of us trying to have a conversation with us, because we are caught up in these short-lived interactions taking place in our internet life.

We use Social media to share the stories of our life. We share narrations and photographs of both the pivotal and mundane moments, and in doing that we weave the story of our life for all to see, to laugh with us, to cry with us, to rejoice with us, to revolt with us and experience with us. I personally love to document the simple moments of life, and I do believe that something profound can happen in the sharing of the human experience.

...But there's another side to this that I have been thinking about. One of the prime reasons we have real-time meetings with friends for lunch, or for coffee, is to catch up on each others lives and the stories that have happened since our last afternoon spent together. However, after seeing everything you both have been up to by means of facebook, it takes some of the incentive out of meeting up. This of course doesn't mean that we don't still meet up, but perhaps it has an impact on the frequency and number of meet-ups. Our stories have been told.

...I have noticed that living online has made me:

Less creative

Websites like Pinterest provide such a treasure trove of inspiration for crafts worth crafting and the gorgeous tones of a life well lived, and I love it!

And yet, I believe that living online has made me less creative. I once looked at my Pinterest board and I took note of how many of these ideas I have collected that I have actually brought to life. Since then, I have made a very active effort to try to actually create what inspires me, but that had to be a very conscious choice and one that involves a very real and unglamorous effort.

Because a strange thing happens when I pin something I love. On some level, the act of pinning an idea and “collecting” it brings about a sublime level of satisfaction, a sense of completion. It’s almost like internally – I feel like I have already completed it on some level. But I didn’t. And my life is no more full because of it. The idea was simply collected. Sometimes too much inspiration is a bad thing, because it paralyzes us. Too many options, the fear of imperfection, mental exhaustion, or inspiration-numbing. There is a time for collecting of inspiration, and there is a time for creation. Inspiration should only be about 10-20%, we don’t need a whole lot of it. We just need something to set our soul on fire and then we have to go and create. The internet has it all the other way around.

Less decisive

Even the most simple decisions of every day life can be googled and this has made me a less decisive person. Often, I am confused and spoiled for choice, and I rely on the internet to make decisions for me. We want to make the “perfect” decision, even when it comes to where to go for dinner with a friend. What about spontaneity? What about making decisions based on what you want, and not based on reviews? What about making mistakes and trying again next time? Why are we so afraid of making a bad decision or having a mildly unpleasant experience? It’s all a part of life.

Less aware

I am less likely to keep track of special days in a loved ones life (birthdays, anniversaries, milestones) because I rely on Facebook to remind me.

While there isn’t much difference between writing it into your calendar, and then seeing your calendar and being reminded of an important date when you otherwise would not have known, the important difference is that at one point in time, you took the time and effort to learn that person’s special day and you made the conscious choice to integrate it into your life.

While the outcome may be the same, the process makes a difference.

(That being said, I think it is lovely that facebook reminds us of the birthdays of all kinds of

friendships we have so that we may wish them, because it may make their day that much more special for them. In this example, I'm talking specifically about our inner circle friends and family.)

Less productive

When was the last time you were able to do a task without checking in on your internet life? How frequently do we check our e-mail, or various social media platforms? Some people can't even make it through a 5 minute drive without checking their phones, which in my humble opinion is both idiotic and cruel.

This level of interruption is catastrophic to our productivity. We forget how to focus on just one task at a time, and are distracted so easily. Imagine what we could accomplish if this was not a ruling factor in our life?

Anonymity

The internet is a breeding ground of extremes. It cultivates complete anonymity and simultaneously a wicked loss of privacy. This sense anonymity leads to so much unkindness in the way we interact with people who perhaps have a different view to us, or represents something we do not like. There's a feeling that we can say whatever cruel things we want, and we forget there is a real human being at the other end, who is reading what you say, and is not in the right mental state to process it. This can lead to cases of profound cyber bullying that can have devastating consequences.

Lack of privacy

The other side of the coin, is lack of privacy. You can never be sure where anything you put on the internet can end up. The concept of how much you share has to be a conscious decision that we come to, and we shouldn't let it happen passively. That might mean looking at your various "internet homes" and think about your purpose and intent for them and what you are comfortable sharing on each one.

No Filter

The Clickbait epidemic is more rampant than ever! There is just so much useless information all

across the internet, and we read it, because it's there, and because it's eye catching. But the majority of what we are exposed to on the internet adds no real value to our life, in fact, some "news" pieces thrive simply on shock-value, underlying negative tones and outrage, half truths and untruths. We lack the filter to process through so much of this kind of content that we subconsciously let this garbage linger within us for days.

Instant Gratification Nation

One thing faster internet speeds have taught us, is that we like things to be quick. We don't want to just reach our ideal body weight, we want to reach it in 2 weeks. We don't just want to learn how to play the guitar, we want to learn to play like Jimi Hendrix in 30 days. We want to get a response to our text message within 2 minutes of us sending it, because....well, texts are instant, and we know the recipient has read it (I mean, they check their phone every 3 minutes like we do, and we know it.)

Without the promise of a result in a brief time span, people used to do things because they wanted/needed to do it. But the prospect that we could try playing the guitar for one month and still be no where near good, it instantly makes the pursuit not as worthwhile.

The Ugly

Living life online vs Real life

Our online life is not real life, it might be a part of it, but it is not it. And I'm glad I realize that now because I don't want to spend my life putting all my energy into simply a projection of life. I want to know life itself.

We look at a beautiful photograph of a man who has climbed to the peak of mountain and stands in his air of triumph and oneness with the world. We like that photo and collect it mentally. We feel good about that photo, it has touched some part of us. Within a split second, we continue scrolling and find the next photo that invokes a similar but numbed sense of awe in us. But the reality is that we are looking at the photo of a man who has climbed a mountain, but the reality is that we have not. We are not even one step closer to climbing a mountain. We watch other people live life, but we are paralyzed in our own.

When we live through a screen, we get a ripped of experience of what life is. That's why we should more of our energy into interacting with life, and not a computer screen.

Boredom and the need for constant stimulation

Boredom; It's not something we experience much of these days, and yet we are more bored and more *boring* than we ever have been. As soon as an inkling of boredom even creeps into our subconscious, we have instantly reached for our phone and we have access to so many different ways to not be bored.

The sensation of boredom: Well, imagine having nothing to do, with nothing planned to do, and no form of technology to distract you from yourself. Sounds like hell.

And it's one of the first things you notice when you go on an internet detox.

Finding the magic of life again

The problem is we are constantly on the search for, and love to surround ourselves with things that entertain us. If we are looking for life to entertain us, then without technology, we will find ourselves bored a lot.

But if we are looking to experience life, then nothing can bore us.

The warm breeze that flows against our cheek is not here to entertain us. It is something to be experienced.

If we look at a flower, it is not entertaining. The flower cannot tell us a story, or a funny joke. But a flower is a flower, it grows, it opens in the sun. We can experience the flower and we can know life.

How to live life offline

Use the internet and don't be used by the internet

The internet is not a bad thing.

It's just that we are supposed to use the internet and not have the internet use us.

How do we use the internet? By using it as the resource for life, but not as life itself.

I think about how my mother uses the internet. She checks her e-mail, respond to e-mails, e-mails me about something new she wants me to do (lol), look up something she needs, order that thing on amazon, like and comment on her friend's facebook photo album, log off, and return to her life and creation. She's probably spent about an hour or an hour and a half on the internet doing all those things. It has a beginning and an ending. It doesn't seep into every moment of her day.

I appreciate that we are different to my parent's generation, and many of us have blogs and businesses that revolve around social media. But that doesn't mean we can't log on, do what we need to do, and then step away and let the rest happen on it's own. A beginning and an ending.

Bring back old forms of connection that you value

Things like writing letters, making a phone call, a surprise visit to a friends house, or printing photographs. It doesn't make sense to live like people lived 60 years ago, because there are so many advances and streamlining in our world now that would be just silly to ignore. So just pick a couple of old-school methods of connection and make an effort to bring them to life again.

Build a Community

One of the things we love about the internet is that it is a place that we can find our people, our community. And guess what? We can find them in the real world too. They exist.

“The opposite of addiction is not abstinence. It's connection.” Sarah Bowen

Just going cold turkey off the internet and your social media communities alone is not the key to happiness and freedom. You have to find the aspects we love about it in the real world with real people too.

What do you love to do? Join classes, groups, seminars, workshops, start a meet-up group and bring like minded people together! Who are your people?

I remember a few summers ago I stood on on my neighbours front porch with a cake that I had baked and wanted to share with them. I didn't know if they were home or not, and I had not called in advance. I started thinking about how long it has been since I have stood at someones doorway without prior arrangements, without knowing if they would be home or not. I have to admit – it felt strange and a little bit awkward. I am so used to reaching someones drive way and sending a quick text “Here.” or “Outside.” to which my friend would come out, or the other way round.

That was the first time I started thinking about how much my world had closed in around me since childhood. When I was little, I remember running to all my neighbours house, ringing their doorbell to see if my friend could come out and play. Sometimes no one was home, sometimes they could play, sometimes they couldn't. I wasn't afraid of rejection, I wasn't afraid of uncertainty, I wasn't afraid of waiting, and I wasn't afraid of standing on someones porch.

Get to know the people you interact with on a daily basis – the barista, the cashier at the grocery store, all the girls who work at the salon, your next door neighbour, the person who always seems to be at the gym at the same time as you, your yoga instructor. Make a heart connection with everyone you meet. Say HELLO, Good morning! to people you see on the street. Smile.

This is how you build community.

Create, practice refine: Practice your trade, talent and skill

Use your hands, your body, to create something. Create music, art, food, build something, write a book, dance, run.

If we want to become good at something in life so that we may share it with the world, then we must practice. We must dedicate our life to our trade, our talent, our skills. We can better ourselves this way. A labour of love.

I remember a few years ago I did not know about TV shows. I mean, obviously I knew they existed, but I never watched any and I certainly didn't know about how to watch them on my laptop. So during my study breaks, I would read, I would reorganize parts of my room, I would practice knitting, or I would draw or write. And then my roommate introduced me to TV shows and TV shows from the comfort of my laptop while laying in bed.

And that was the beginning of the end, lol.

I started spending my breaks and before bed watching shows, enjoying the mindless, effortless entertainment they would give me. It was much easier than reorganizing, or reading, or knitting, or drawing or writing, but far less rewarding.

And now I want to go back, and I'll be the first to admit that it isn't easy. I feel like when I am tired, I only have the energy to watch something, and not the energy to create. But I know that is not true, because I used to do it and it never felt like work. It felt like pleasure. So now it's a process of unlearning, and remembering what came naturally to me in the very beginning.

Ps. But I will always love The Office.

Live your stories, your legacy

Live your life boldly and have memorable adventures.

I remember a story my grandfather told me about how he left India on a ship to to the US to study Botany, with nothing but 100 dollars in cash and no way to reach his family other than to write a letter that would take over a month to reach home.

I don't want the majority of my life stories to revolve around the internet. I don't want to tell stories to my children that start with "and one time, mommy went on the internet and...." Lol.

So don't be afraid to go into the unknown, to do something that frightens you, to be a little bit uncomfortable, to chase your dreams, and go on some adventures.

Going offline won't make you a happier person.

...Or even a better person.

There is no promise of happiness from simply disconnecting with the online world. In fact, once the novelty of having "more time" (as an example) wears off, what matters is what you do in that time.

I read a very fascinating article by Paul Miller, a man who went off the internet for an entire year. **He writes about his experience here.** In this honest sharing, something that struck him was that the first few months offline were blissful and he felt like he was on some kind of natural high with a fresh, new affinity for life. However, once the novelty of "I don't use the internet" wore off, he found

that he was not really different to how he was when he was online all the time. He still found ways to waste his time, to be anti-social, to be unproductive – just in different ways now.

So the most important thing is what you do with your time. Bad habits and tendencies will always lure us in with their ease of nature. But if we become masters of our time, and creators of our life, then we have some influence on where we go from here. So it's important, internet or no internet, to be conscience of our tendencies and habits that you create for yourself in your life.

Burst into life

A passage I shared on [a previous blog post](#):

I love to create. I have a lot of ideas inside of me. But most of my creations and interests are things like writing poetry, prose, and my blog, reading, creating music, yoga, photographs, meditation, contemplation. It involves a lot of internal and quiet work. I know this is a big part of who I am and I am glad for it. But lately I feel a strong desire in me to really BE in this world. To get out and get comfortable with this earth. To engage physically in life. To be active, to create, to build community. To use my hands to make something special. To learn new skills. To always keep creating. To live more human and less digital. I love and respect the part me that is internal because I know that it is sacred and true. But there is a part of my spirit that also wants to burst into LIFE!

To burst into life means to channel your internal energies to create something. To get to know life more intimately. To know what it is to be alive.

Be prepared for boredom

Without the internet, once the first pangs of boredom start, one of the first things we realize is that we have nothing at arms length to relieve us of this boredom. That for us to be fascinated again, it will require a considerable amount of effort. It may require us to step out of our comfort zone, to step out of our home, our neighbourhood. It may require us to try something new, try a new way of being, to meet new people, it may require us to startle ourselves a little bit.

We have to know what it is to be comfortable in our own company. We have to know what it is to create something to pour ourselves into.

Start now

Think about your internet usage and make your own decision about what kind of changes you could make.

Do you need to go all out and be completely internet free for some time?

Or are there certain websites that you want to deactivate from – that are just too much of a time suck and add too little value to your life?

Or do you need to give yourself a certain amount of time to check on your online life, and limit it to only that time?

+++

I hope you enjoyed my musings on the internet and social media and that it has given you some food for thought.

If you made it this far, I would love to hear from you. I want to know:

- + What is your experience with the internet and social media?
- + What do you miss about pre-internet-crazed days?
- + How do you use it and how do you make it work for you?
- + How much do you rely on your cell phone? Do you feel like you are missing a limb when it is not around?

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3 COMMENTS

Kristy ww. JULY 31, 2016 AT 8:58 PM

“Use the Internet and don’t be used by the Internet” — I like this... I unplugged myself from some social media sites earlier this month, because I needed to learn how to live off the Internet for a while... I got to discover better things about myself and I am almost ready to turn it back on but I’m afraid of getting a sucked into a cycle again. But this is a great post friend, thanks for sharing!

Kristy ww

<http://kissmyknee.com>

Like

REPLY

Faithylala AUGUST 2, 2016 AT 8:59 AM

Reblogged this on everythingdigitalmedia.com and commented:

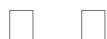
This article sums up the way I've been feeling about social media especially in the past few months... great way to keep in touch virtually...but we're also losing realife interactions.

Like

REPLY

Pingback: The first of a new month – Malavika Suresh

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Why "Nonline" Is the New "Offline"

Patrick Lucas Austin

6/01/17 8:00AM •

Filed to: INTERNET

47

6

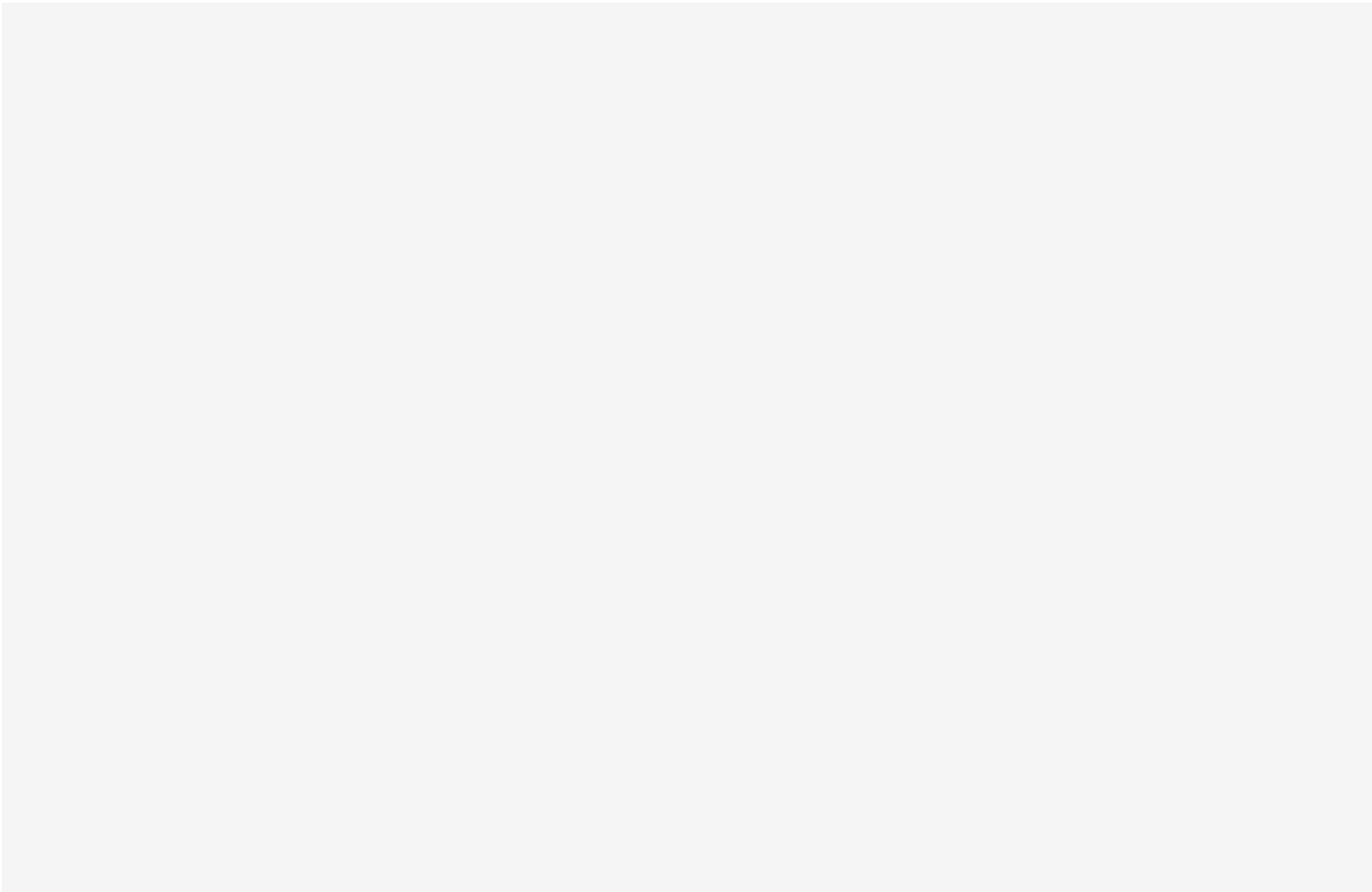


Image credit: sc.lover/Flickr

When people ask where I live I'm more likely to say "Twitter" than my city of residence. And just like my actual city, sometimes I need to get out of town and hole up somewhere else—somewhere with actual trees with actual birds tweeting.

Everyone has their own way to deal with internet burnout. Weekend stints away from technology; writing essays about how stepping away from the Internet changed your life for the better (or worse); even putting your phone inside of a faraday cage could all help ease the feeling you get from checking your inbox.

How To Block Social Sites For Your Own Damn Good

The Royal Society for Public Health just released a report containing what you already knew about...

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Going offline? You don't need to turn it into a spectacle, nor do you need to cut the web out of your life completely and live like a Luddite. Perhaps the solution to your distracted lifestyle isn't a jettisoning of your entire online existence, but a scaling back of what you consider "going offline."

Instead of going offline—ripping your clothes off and bounding into the woods—might I offer a different suggestion? Have you tried going "nonline"?

Writer Patrick Rhone made reference to the tongue-in-cheek definition of the word provided by editor Jason Rehmus.

nonline or non-line (adj.): No longer found on, made available to, or primarily accessed or contacted through the Internet.

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In his newsletter he described his self-imposed exile from the modern web as a quest to rediscover writing for an audience of one instead of the thousands of followers he has, as well as a realization of how easy it is to feel like everything is immediate, urgent, and demands attention. Being online today means keeping everyone updated or informed of your activities.

The tools make it so very easy to broadcast even the silliest and most fleeting of thoughts immediately. I've adopted the sense of extreme urgency I feel (perhaps wrongly, I admit) the tools demand from me. That everyone needs to know "What's Happening?" in my head right this second. I've also convinced myself that, if I don't show up and keep hitting publish, the people that really do care about my work and words will stop caring and move on. I think that's a problem.

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Okay, “nonline” is a little pretentious, but it does a great job of defining what we consider “online” and “offline” activity. For many, going offline means unplugging and turning off everything with a display and an internet connection. Going offline involves doing things in the “real world” like cooking for your “family” and “talking” on the “phone” with someone you “love” or something like that. But going “nonline” might mean keeping up on your email (a necessity more than an option) while abandoning the rest of your online persona. It ain’t going anywhere.

The benefits of going “nonline” are apparent if you’ve ever thought about how you feel after using the Internet for just a few hours. It’s constantly tricking us, making us think we’re smarter than we are, substituting actual knowledge with where you found it, and bombarding you with a constant stream of negative news, vitriol-spewing commenters (not you guys, I love you), and jokes about “covfefe” while the world falls apart around you. All of that isn’t great for your mental well-being, as asserted by nearly every article about the web.

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Patrick Lucas Austin

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DISCUSSION

Mental Iceberg

6/01/17 8:40AM

Many years ago, I had burnt out from my job as a chef. I took a job where I ended up having many hour a day online. Kind of a bullshit job that paid well.

After about maybe six months on that job I instituted a rule with myself. The second I walked in the door of my home and on the weekends, no internet.

If I had a question I needed to look up real quick or something, ok. Otherwise nada.

I needed to set those boundaries for myself for my mental health and because I didn't want to set that example for my son to see growing up - a mom always with her nose in her phone 24/7 or online on Fb or whatever. I guess I did a good job because now my son is in his mid 20's and he's really not on Fb or Instagram or anything like that all that often ;)

