

Finding That Healthy Balance With Devices

Distractions are abundant in our world - and our laptops, tablets, and smart phones are a significant contributor to those distractions. We grab our smart phones when they beep or ring and scroll through various apps any time we're bored or curious.

Looking at screens all day long can be distracting, especially when trying to get work done that requires actual thinking. However, there are many technology benefits, particularly in times like these when many of us find ourselves far away from our loved ones. There are two sides to this argument, and ultimately, it's about establishing a healthy relationship with technology.

To find this balance, we've outlined a few simple tips that allow you to stay connected with distant friends and family whilst also looking after your wellbeing.

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Limit Phone Time

One of the first things many of us do in the morning is check our phones. A study found 80% of smartphone users check their mobile phones within 15 minutes of waking up every morning⁽¹⁾. This can lead us to feel an urge to address pending messages or urgent emails

immediately. This is often unnecessary. We should try to make a conscious effort to do something else in the morning before reading messages, such as having breakfast, taking a shower or a morning exercise regime.

It might be worthwhile making a schedule for when you use your devices. This could include staying off certain apps for a day each week or only using technology between 10 am and 6 pm, for example. Most smartphones even have settings that allow you to limit your screen time to specific hours of the day. Whatever it is you do to create this, balance can be beneficial in the long-term for your wellbeing.

Body And Mind

Try not to get carried away by the online world and look to use it more productively. It's essential to keep active, particularly as we continue to work from our homes. It is nice to get outdoors in nature for a walk or run but we realise many are still facing lockdown restrictions, with gyms closed or normal face to face sports or exercise classes still cancelled. In those circumstances you can look to the web as a resource of activity to still get physical exercise. There is a whole realm of fitness resources online that can help boost your daily energy and enhance productivity, in between your working day.

UnitedHealthcare Global's Optum My Wellbeing app contains various challenges, such as step counts and cycling challenges to allow you to be more active and improve your fitness. Not only can you track your progress, but you can track it against others worldwide, giving you a fun, interactive way to connect with friends and family.

Take Regular Breaks

It's essential to take your eyes off your screen and refocus your attention. Regular time away from your devices, such as a short walk around the park or to make yourself a refreshment, not only helps recharge your energy levels but can also help you to work more efficiently⁽²⁾.

Often, we find ourselves in a position where we are glued to our screen, whether it be a looming deadline or waiting to hear feedback from a customer. Over 70% of people sleep either holding their smartphone, having it in bed with them, or having it on their nightstand⁽³⁾. We know

that it's sometimes hard to move away from our devices, particularly in high pressured situations, but there are ways you can make it a little easier on yourself. Try changing your screen to black and white and/or turning it onto night mode when you go to bed. This can help your eyes and brain relax when working long hours.

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This same guidance applies to children as well. Depending on lockdown restrictions across the globe, many children continue to spend a considerable amount of time being educated online. Its important parents ensure children are balancing their time on and off screen. Although there is an expectation to be online learning for most of the day, make sure kids are taking regular breaks. Encourage your children to have lunch outside, stretch during breaks between classes, and move away from the screen at the end of the school day.

Create A New Routine

Technology has evolved significantly – and we can use these advances to our benefit to help balance our digital and normal daily

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lives. Schedule incoming emails with an app. This will collect all your messages and deliver them to you at certain times of the day. This can help you to prioritise your workload. Scheduling a few times a day can be much more efficient than shifting your focus away from other important tasks every time you receive an email.

It's also important that when taking a holiday, you do everything you can to have some healthy downtime and switch off from work pressures. Try to turn off your email notifications when you are on leave or limit yourself to checking them once a day. Ensure everyone knows you are taking a holiday, and whilst offline leave another point of call to contact during your absence.

That way, you can recharge and come back motivated to work.

We know that all this is often easier said than done. Many are required to be responsive 24/7 and use technology as a primary tool to stay connected with distant loved ones. However, if you strike the right balance, you can quickly establish a healthy relationship with your devices.

References:

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We look forward to hopefully seeing you in October and in the meantime, stay safe and well.

Best wishes,
Helen Elliott & Ben Everson

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