How to take a digital detox to promote better mental health

Digital detoxing – when you take a planned break from your devices – is a great way to improve your mental health. Time without digital devices may allow you to become more mindful of unhealthy online habits and enable you to create a more meaningful routine.

Kings College London found that 39% of people aged 18-30 experienced symptoms such as losing control over how long they spend on their phone and feelings of distress when they couldn't access it. Whilst further studies have shown that increased time on screens and social media can lead to depression in adolescents.

This month why not take part in our tech timeout challenge to promote better mental health this summer?

1. Turn off notifications: It's tough to give your devices the cold shoulder when they're begging for your attention with frequent notifications. Pick which notifications are important to you (such as emails from your boss or calls from your children's school) and then set aside a time to check your other platforms for those not-so-urgent updates.

2. Limit yourself to one device at a time: Instead of cutting yourself off from technology altogether, start by limiting yourself to just one device at a time. If you're used to watching TV whilst scrolling on your phone, or texting during Teams calls, challenge yourself to give your undivided attention to a single device.

3. Make airplane mode your friend: This mobile device setting is helpful for blocking calls, messages and internet access. And, since airplane mode only disables your phone's cell and WIFI signals, you can turn it on while still using your device to take notes, play games or listen to music.

4. Designate device-free zones: Having trouble committing to an hour without internet? Think of your digital detox as spatial instead of time-based by creating tech-free areas within your home. Maybe you decide not to use your phone in the kitchen so you can cook and eat with loved ones or perhaps make your bedroom a device-free space, so you can unwind before going to sleep.

5. Give your screen time a purpose: Next time you are tempted to reach for your phone, ask yourself why you want to use it. If you can't figure out how to stop 'doomscrolling' and mindless browsing, then your mental health could be at risk. Try being mindful of the times you pick up your device, be aware of the times you're bored or looking for a dopamine hit and approach your screen time with purpose and intention

Try this: Replace mindless scrolling with meditation

At the opposite end of the scale to 'doomscrolling' is meditation. A few minutes of mindfulness every day could do wonders for your anxiety levels and overall mental health.

The next time you're tempted to mindlessly reach for your phone, look beyond your screen and acknowledge your environment.

Take two or three deep inhale and exhales.

Stand up, stretch and shift your perspective.

Return to a seated position to look beyond your screen again and take a minute to gauge your internal emotions. What are you feeling right now? Where do you feel it?

This simple practice is excellent for re-orienting and re-focusing after a long period of screen time.