



Spending time online isn't always a mental health boost – so how can you prioritise digital wellbeing? Here's five ideas as we mark World Mental Health Day (October 10).

What's the best way to look after yourself on social media? Well, one quick way would be to cancel all your social media accounts immediately and never post, scroll or snap again...but I'm guessing you neither have that luxury, nor the desire. So, here are five ways to help you stay mentally healthy in your ever-increasingly digital life.

1. Audit your social media usage...and set limits

Do you find yourself automatically reaching for your phone and running through a routine of checking social media apps, while barely conscious of the process? If so, you're definitely not alone and it might be worth doing a quick audit of your social media usage.

I'm always surprised when I flick to the left on my iPhone and look at my screen time, most used apps and number of phone pick-ups made across the week.

Once we're aware of how much we are instinctively pulled towards to our phones and social media, we can start to make more conscious choices and take small actions to help set boundaries for ourselves.

This could be turning off notifications, setting time limits; or even deleting apps and using browsers instead to access social media. This will hopefully help give you back a greater sense of control.

2. Review your relationship with social media

It might be helpful from time to time to stop, step back and notice when you're scrolling on social media. Is it intentional or are you aimlessly moving from post to post? Maybe you're bored or perhaps trying to avoid something else – another task or a difficult feeling?

You can also try taking a micro moment to consider what you're sharing and, more importantly, why you're publishing that post - what's the motivation behind it?

Most of us have been guilty of boasting on social media – sharing photos from that holiday, restaurant, gig etc. (I know I certainly have) - and although it's natural to share our exciting and special experiences from time to time, it's worth wondering whether there's an underlying need to be seen, heard and validated externally by others, rather than relying on our own internal sense of self-worth.

The more mindful – and less mindless - we are on social media, the better.

3. Disconnect from your phone, not from people

When you're next in a restaurant, have a look around and see how many phones you can spot either in people's hands or lying on the table.

There's evidence to suggest that just having your phone within eyesight, even if you're not actively using it, can lead to a sense of disconnection between people.

The temptation to check social feeds, messages and notifications can be just too great. Putting your phones away is the best way of valuing the person you're with – out of sight, out of mind.

Better still, can you give yourself a detox from social media for a weekend, a day, or even for an hour or two? You could invest in a 'dumb' phone or dig out your old Nokia 3310 to help you take a break from your socials (just don't get hooked on Snake!).

4. Prioritise sleeping over scrolling

I've seen first-hand how the dopamine hit in the reward centre of the brain, generated by receiving likes and comments on a social post, can lead to checking and rechecking for updates, leaving me feeling completely wired. This is particularly problematic in the run up to bedtime.

I've learned to really prize my sleep, which (like diet and exercise) is the bedrock of good mental health. Putting in place measures to help resist the temptation to scroll before sleeping can be useful. You could leave your phone in another room an hour or so before you start winding down, switch it onto airplane mode or turn it off altogether.

Using an alarm clock or smartwatch to wake you up rather than your mobile is another good option. Try and make your bedroom a sacred, device-free space, even if it's for one or two days a week.

It's easier said than done, true, but you may reap the benefits if you do.

5. Curate your content *

Curating a positive social media feed on your personal channels is essential for maintaining a healthy digital space. Here are some tips to ensure your feed remains uplifting and nourishing:

- Follow positive accounts: choose to follow accounts that share inspiring, motivating and life-affirming content.
- Unfollow negative sources: remove accounts that consistently post negative, offensive or stress-inducing content.

Engage with positive posts: like, comment and share positive content from others. The platform's algorithms will then show more similar content on your feed.

- Share positive content yourself: sharing your own uplifting stories, insights or photos can help create a more positive digital environment for yourself and others.

*Source for #5: [pi.ai](#)

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