

10 Digital Detox Experiments

1. Download an app that tracks your smartphone use on a normal day. Two options are the [Moment app](#) on iPhone or the [Space app](#) on android. How many hours do you use it? Was it surprising or what you expected?
2. Which app used up the most time? Remove it from your phone for 1 day, 1 week, or the whole month – you decide. How did that feel? Did you decide to put it back onto your phone or keep it off longer?
3. This is a simple mindfulness exercise called Social Media Noting. It only takes a few minutes. (1) Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. (2) Open your eyes and then open your favorite social media app. Pause, what feelings do you notice emerge immediately? (3) As you scroll, what thoughts and feelings come up? Joy? Peace? Excitement? Learning? Compassion? Validation? Boredom? Frustration? Anger? Comparison with others? Judgment? Low self esteem? Stress response? Anxiety? Etc. (4) Then notice if some pictures or accounts make you feel better or worse than others, or does the whole experience have a similar feel? (5) Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths again. (6) Based on what you noticed, you can make some choices. You can unfollow accounts that brought up negative feelings and add more accounts like the ones that make you feel good. You can limit your use of the app, or decide you don't need limits.
4. Turn off all push notifications on your phone for 24 hours. Did you miss them, or was your day more peaceful? Decide whether you'd like to keep them off, reactivate them, or pick and choose just a few types of notifications to receive.
5. Experience waiting, without pulling out your phone. Whether that be in line, or at a stoplight, or waiting for a pot to boil. Simply wait without distraction. Is this difficult or easy for you to do?
6. If you take pictures every day, go a day without taking a photo. Otherwise, go to an event or activity where you would normally take a photo, and leave your phone at home. Experience it through your eyes instead of the camera. How did that feel?
7. At a time when you would normally listen to podcasts, try not listening to anything. Allow room for silence, and just be present with the activity. (Walking, driving, cooking, cleaning, etc.) Do you normally allow moments of silence in your life, or was this a new experience?
8. Sleeping and waking experiments: Turn your phone off 1 hour before bed and keep it out of the bedroom for the night. Then, go 1 hour in the morning without looking at a screen. Did this improve the quality of your sleep? Did it change how your day felt? Were the changes positive or negative?
9. Email experiments: Don't leave your email open as you work on your computer. Instead, choose 1 or 2 times per day where you will check email and avoid checking in between those times. Also, experiment with an email auto-reply, setting boundaries around the times you will check email. This allows you to re-establish focus during your workday and set boundaries regarding time off. Were you comfortable with this experiment, or did it make you nervous? Were you able to focus more? Relax more?
10. Take a completely screen-free day (no phone, no computer, no TV). How did this feel? What were the challenges? What were the benefits? Is this something you can see yourself doing regularly?
11. Bonus question. What are the most beneficial uses of technology in your life? Which apps make your life easier, or simply better?