

Digital Wellness: Balancing Screen Time and Real-Life Connections

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As a student in the digital age, my laptop is literally my everything. From attending virtual classes, doing work, and watching the latest series on Netflix, every aspect of my life seems to converge onto that glowing screen. But over the last semester, I've learned a valuable lesson – while digital connectivity can be a boon, it is essential to strike a balance with real-life connections.

Let's rewind a bit. In my first semester, I was excited to easily access everything I would need on my computer and soon my screen time skyrocketed. Assignments, group projects, Zoom calls, online videos, social media, and late-night movies. I have a habit of checking my phone the instant I receive a notification. I have learned that this is called technostress. It is stress-related to over-reliance on devices.

Embracing Digital Wellness

I chanced upon the concept of digital wellness during a late-night Google search (ironically, on my phone). Digital wellness is the optimal state of health and well-being one can achieve while using digital technology. It's not about quitting technology but using it in a way that enhances our lives, rather than consuming it.

Here are some strategies I've adopted and concepts that changed my perspective:

- **Mindful Consumption and Digital Diet:** It's easy to get lost in endless scrolls and clicks. Being selective about the digital content we engage with is paramount. Just as we watch our food intake, a 'digital diet' refers to consciously curating what we consume online, focusing on content that adds value and growth.

Whether it's enlightening online courses or inspiring podcasts, choosing quality digital content can elevate our online experiences. Periodically, take a moment to assess your most-visited websites and applications. If they aren't contributing positively to your life, consider reducing your consumption or replacing them with more beneficial alternatives.

- **Set Boundaries:** Allocate specific time slots for studying, leisure, and other tasks. This way, your mind gets a clear signal when it's time to work and when it's time to relax. Consider adopting the Pomodoro Technique, where you work for 25 minutes and then take a 5-minute break, it has worked wonders for me.
- **Use Technology to Your Advantage & Digital Minimalism:** While tools like Forest or Freedom can anchor our focus in a digital storm, there's a deeper philosophy that can redefine our relationship with technology — Digital Minimalism. Conceptualized by Cal Newport, this philosophy urges us to be intentional about our tech usage.

Take a week to evaluate how and why you use various digital tools. Are they enhancing your life, or simply eating up your time? Aim to declutter your digital space, retaining only those tools and platforms that align with your goals and values.

- **Physical Wellness:** Invest in ergonomics. A comfortable chair, a laptop stand, and even blue light-blocking glasses can prevent circadian rhythm disruption. By limiting blue light exposure, especially before bedtime, it improves your sleep-wake cycle significantly.
- **Digital Detox & Nature:** Dedicate a day or even a few hours every week to stay off screens completely. Engage in activities that do not require screens such as going for a walk, drawing or painting, knitting, playing puzzles, or whatever you like! Numerous studies have pointed out the cognitive and emotional benefits of spending time in nature.
- **Connect Offline:** Challenge yourself to allocate specific times during the day solely for device-free interactions. Whether it's a short coffee break with a classmate or a walk around the campus, these real-life engagements can offer refreshing mental breaks and deepen your relationships.

Finding Your Digital Balance

By no means am I perfect in my digital wellness journey. There are days when binge-watching a show trumps all logic. But, by being aware and making small, conscious decisions, I've found a better balance after actively working on it for a while.

Even though we can't change the tools and platforms required to continue our academic and personal growth, we can try moderating our use and making conscious decisions about how and when we use technology.

I urge you to take a moment and reflect on your digital practices, it's not about criticizing screen time, but to use them in ways that enrich our daily lives.

References:

[National Library of Medicine](#)

[Deep Work by Cal Newport](#)

[Science Advances](#)

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