

How to Digitally Detox

by Alison Main

Let's face it. We're all addicted to our digital technologies. I'm guilty of this too. We crave constant connection – in a car, in a park, on the train, at a café, in our homes. We're distracted from experiencing the present moment – too busy photographing our experiences to post to our social media pseudo-realities, or wondering what new and exciting opportunity awaits a mere digital ping away.

Can you go an hour (or even ten minutes) without glancing at your phone? Can you survive a day without checking your email? Do your kids spend more time staring at a screen than playing outside with their friends? Do you suffer a mild anxiety attack if you can't connect to Wi-Fi... or if your iPad runs out of battery... or if your car's Bluetooth isn't synched?

These digital technologies keep us connected to friends, family, and colleagues. They serve a beneficial purpose – they help us work more productively, plan more efficiently, and socialize more expansively. But they also wear down our real-time relationships, and they wear down our bodies too. Simply put: all of our devices and electronic gadgets emit electromagnetic fields (EMFs), some in the low-frequency range (i.e. your toaster, your power cords, etc), and some in the radiofrequency range (i.e. your cell phone, your wireless-enabled laptop, your wearable smart tech, etc). EMFs are a known stressor on our bioelectrical bodies. So, for our overall health and balance, it's prudent to take a break when we can.

Entire books and blogs have been devoted to this topic. But to jump start your wellness right now, here's an introductory "How to" guide to digitally detox your life and your home.

Start with your bedroom.

Alarm clock. Lamp. iPhone. Tablet. Sounds like your nightstand, right? But the fewer devices in your bedroom, the better night's sleep you'll get. If you do nothing else, do this: power down and unplug all electronic devices and lights in your bedroom before you go to sleep. That includes your cell phone, computer, tablets, chargers,

lamps, televisions, video recorders, cable boxes, cordless phones, computers, and electronic gaming systems. Better yet, move some of them out of your bedroom permanently.

Charge all your phones and devices outside the bedroom. Use a battery-powered alarm clock instead of your phone. But if you absolutely must use your mobile as your wake-up call, turn Airplane mode ON; turn Wi-Fi and Bluetooth OFF. Your alarm will still work this way.

All these digital devices and electronics contribute to electromagnetic stress on the body, often emitting frequencies even when turned off (but still plugged in). And the artificial blue light spectrum from glowing screens and LED lights actually suppresses melatonin production, keeping us all awake and feeding chronic insomnia. Your sleep area is where your body has a chance to rest and regenerate from all the stressors of your day. You want to create a safe low-EMF sleep haven for your body, both physiologically and mentally, so you can rebalance and restore for the next day.

Get some distance.

Never touch your devices to your body. Ladies, keep your cell phones in your bag and off your person. Gentleman, never put your cell phone in your pocket for the sake of your reproductive health. And parents, keep all devices away from your children's heads. Use speaker mode or an air tube headset when talking on your cell phone. Laptop doesn't literally mean "on top of your lap." Put it on your desk/table, and ideally use a wired keyboard and mouse. Sit at least six to eight feet away from your television or gaming station. The further you get from your devices and electronics, the less the burden on your body.

Get wired.

Turn off the Wi-Fi (I know, don't hate me, please keep reading...). Humans are not meant to be surrounded by a constant overlapping stream of man-made pulsed radiofrequency. Remember Ethernet cords?

They're still around. Choose wired Ethernet for internet connectivity (it's actually faster than Wi-Fi). You can create a wired internet network quite easily in your home, with just a few Ethernet cords and a wired router. And yes, Netflix can still stream when hard-line connected.

At the very least, take a scaled down approach by disabling your Wi-Fi just at night. You'll find either an on/off switch on your wireless router, or you may need to unplug the device itself. A lot of internet carriers allow you to manage your wireless capabilities through online administrative access. I've had experience with all three methods of disabling Wi-Fi, and I can assure you: have no fear... the Wi-Fi will be there again when you turn it back on. Sleeping without Wi-Fi transmitting in your house gives your body a chance to rest and rebuild itself when your household is not online.

And most importantly, never position your Wi-Fi router in any bedroom, on top of your workstation, or anywhere close to where you spend the most time.

Pretend it's 1985.

Switch your cordless phones for a corded landline. Cordless and DECT phones emit high levels of radiofrequency radiation, particularly from their base stations. So if you still have a landline, it's best to keep this one corded. Get one of those retro phones as a conversation piece. If this is not a technology change you can make, then at a minimum unplug all bedroom cordless phones at night. And make sure the base station is farthest from your bedroom.

Light the way.

Replace your CFLs with incandescent bulbs. Florescent and compact-florescent lights produce significantly more electromagnetic fields. And some LED lights produce dirty electricity due to their switching power supply, which is also unhealthy for us. The best lights for your home and office are conventional or daylight incandescent bulbs; or line-voltage (120 V) halogen lamps.

Also, while mood lighting can be cool for hosting evening soirees, it's healthier to avoid dimmers or three-way switches. These both generate a significant amount of EMFs and added radiation due to their manipulation of voltage.

Step away from the cords.

You know that jumble of cords under your desk and your bed? Well, not only is it gathering dust bunnies, but multiple overlapping cords increase electromagnetic fields, which keeps your body in stress mode. Straighten out those cords with a couple of those handy organizers. Move them several feet away from where you sit, work, and sleep. And do not cross power cords with extension cords.

Make believe you're a pilot.

Airplane mode can be used here on the ground too. This smart phone feature blocks your phone from communicating with network towers, thereby reducing your exposure to radiofrequency radiation. When you don't need to make a call or access data, switch your phone into Airplane mode, or turn it off. Even a temporary phone break can be beneficial.

Visit Mother Nature.

Get outside when you can. Take a walk. Stroll through a park. Plant some flowers. Walk barefoot on the beach. And leave your digital devices at home (or powered off). There's no benefit to hugging a tree while you're texting and tweeting.

We live in a hyper-connected digital world now. You don't need to run away to a remote island to take a breather. You can control your home and your own technology usage every day. So, unplug when you can. Take some time to disconnect. I bet you'll start to recharge.

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