



Digital Wellness

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WellU @HT Weekly Wellness Newsletter

Digital wellness (also known as digital wellbeing or digital health) refers to one's intentional pursuit of creating a healthy balance (or relationship) with technology, both in the workplace and in our personal lives (Citrix, 2024; Thomas et al., 2022). Simply, digital wellness encompasses the balance and healthy usage of digital technologies to enhance overall well-being.



In today's fast-paced digital age, where technology permeates nearly every aspect of our lives, the concept of digital wellness has become increasingly relevant. Excessive screen time, digital addiction, cyberbullying, and online privacy concerns are among the challenges that underscore the importance of prioritizing digital wellness (Thomas et al., 2022; Vanden Abeele et al., 2022).

By adopting mindful and intentional approaches to digital consumption, individuals can cultivate healthier relationships with technology. In this digital era, fostering digital wellness is not just a choice but a necessity for holistic well-being. On this issue of our wellness newsletter, we dive into digital wellness and share strategies for a good digital wellbeing.

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What is digital wellness and why is it important?



Understanding Digital Wellness: Why It Matters More Than Ever

In today's technology dependent world, the concept of digital wellness has emerged as a crucial aspect of overall well-being. Digital wellness refers to the mindful and intentional use of digital technologies to promote physical, mental, and emotional health (Thakral, 2023). As our reliance on digital devices continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important to understand the impact of our digital habits on our lives.

Digital wellness intertwines with various other dimensions of wellness, including:

- **Physical Wellness.** Excessive screen time and sedentary behavior can lead to health issues such as eye strain, disrupted sleep patterns, and musculoskeletal problems. Prioritizing regular breaks from screens, maintaining good posture, and engaging in physical activity can help mitigate these risks (Zeeni et al., 2018; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2010).
- **Emotional Wellness:** Constant exposure to digital notifications, social media, and online content can contribute to stress, anxiety, and feelings of overwhelm. Moreover, social media platforms often facilitate comparison, cyberbullying, and negative self-talk, impacting emotional well-being. Fostering healthy relationships, seeking support when needed, and curating a positive online environment can help maintain emotional balance. Practicing digital mindfulness, setting boundaries around device usage, and cultivating offline hobbies and interests are essential for protecting mental health (Boumosleh & Jaalouk, 2017; Abi-Jaoude, Naylor & Pignatiello, 2020; Pera, 2020).
- **Social Wellness.** Excessive digital use can interfere with face-to-face interactions and deepen feelings of isolation. Nurturing meaningful connections offline, prioritizing quality time with loved ones, and setting aside device-free zones can strengthen relationships and foster a sense of belonging (Twenge, 2017; Sha, Sariyska, Riedle, Lachmann & Montag, 2018).

- **Intellectual and Occupational Wellness.** Constant multitasking and digital distractions can impair concentration and productivity. Implementing strategies such as time management techniques, digital detoxes, and minimizing notifications can enhance focus and efficiency.

In conclusion, digital wellness is essential for navigating the digital age mindfully and responsibly. By cultivating healthy digital habits, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-care, individuals can harness the benefits of technology while safeguarding their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As we strive for a balanced and harmonious relationship with technology, prioritizing digital wellness becomes paramount in leading fulfilling and meaningful lives in the digital age.

Embracing Life Beyond the Screen: Why Spending Less Time on Social Media Matters

There is no question that technology is a fundamental part of everyone's life. In fact, data from the Pew Research Center indicate that 95% of U.S. adults report using the internet. Furthermore, they also reported that 97% of US adults (18 and older) own a smartphone and 68% of Americans report using some type of social media (including Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, X, or LinkedIn) (Pew Research Center, 2024).



Given the pervasiveness of technology and increased access to social media through smartphones, researchers from a variety of academic fields are studying the impact of social media on our health and well-being. The research highlights serious concerns about the contribution of social media to higher rates of depression and anxiety and lower rates of self-esteem among young adults and adolescents (Abi-Jaoude, Naylor & Pignatiello, 2020; Pera, 2020). In an era where digital devices dominate our daily routines, it's increasingly vital to recognize the value of disconnecting from social media and reconnecting with the real world. While social media platforms offer connectivity and entertainment, excessive usage can have detrimental effects on our mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Beyari, 2023; Meier & Reinecke, 2021).

Spending less time on social media and more time engaging in face-to-face interactions and outdoor activities can lead to numerous benefits. Here's why:

- **Enhanced Mental Health.** Recent research findings have established a correlation between excessive social media use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness. By stepping away from the screen and fostering meaningful offline connections, individuals can experience improved mood and mental resilience (Riehm et al., 2019; Beyari, 2023).
- **Authentic Connections.** While social media allows us to stay connected with friends and family, it often fosters shallow interactions and comparisons. Investing time in real-world relationships enables deeper connections and fosters a sense of belonging and community (Karim et al., 2020)

- **Outdoor's Therapeutic Effects.** Spending time outdoors has been linked to reduced stress levels, improved mood, and enhanced creativity. Whether it's a leisurely stroll in the park, a hike in the mountains, or a day at the beach, immersing oneself in nature offers a rejuvenating escape from the digital world (Bunch, 2023).
- **Physical Well-Being.** Excessive screen time is associated with sedentary behavior and a lack of physical activity, which can contribute to health issues such as obesity and cardiovascular problems (Duncan et al., 2012; Boone et al., 2007). By prioritizing outdoor pursuits like walking, cycling, or playing sports, individuals can promote their physical fitness and overall health.
- **Mindful Living.** Disconnecting from social media allows individuals to be more present and mindful in their daily lives. Instead of constantly seeking validation or distractions online, embracing moments of stillness and solitude can foster self-awareness and inner peace (Klase, Connors & Abhari, 2022).

In conclusion, while social media undoubtedly has its benefits, it is important to create a balance while prioritizing real-world experiences; that is, strengthening in-person human connections. By spending less time on social media and more time engaging in social interactions and outdoor activities, individuals can nurture their well-being and lead more fulfilling lives beyond the screen.

Strategies to Enhance Digital Wellness

In the previous sections, we have address digital wellness and its importance for overall wellbeing. we now provide recommendations for enhancing digital wellness; and why not, creating a more conscious approach to how we use technology and live our lives.

Here are some helpful strategies:



- **Set Boundaries (Setting Screen Time Limits):** Establish clear boundaries around device usage by designating specific times for work productivity, studying, socializing, and relaxation. Use features like screen time limits, turn off phone notifications, and app blockers to minimize distractions during focused work sessions.
- **Practice Digital Detox:** Schedule regular breaks from screens to recharge and recalibrate. Designate device-free zones in living spaces and participate in offline activities such as hobbies, exercise, and social gatherings. Moreover, spend more time outdoors!
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Cultivate mindfulness practices to enhance awareness of digital habits and their impact on well-being. Practice mindful breathing, meditation, or yoga to foster a sense of presence and reduce stress. As a place to start, join the WellU RAM Wellness Program's mindfulness sessions!
- **Curate Digital Environment:** Audit social media feeds and digital content to create a positive and uplifting online environment. Unfollow accounts that trigger negative emotions and seek out platforms that promote inspiration and connection. Yes, social media can be entertaining but it can also harm your mood so stay away from negative sites.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** Maintain consistent sleep schedules and establish bedtime routines conducive to quality rest. Limit screen time before bed and create a calming environment

conducive to relaxation and sleep.

- **Seek Support:** Reach out to campus resources such as counseling services for support with managing digital wellness and navigating challenges related to technology use.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize self-care practices such as healthy nutrition, regular exercise, and adequate hydration to support overall well-being and resilience in the face of digital stressors.
- **Promote Balance:** Strive for balance between academic responsibilities and personal interests by scheduling time for leisure activities, hobbies, and social interactions outside the digital realm.
- **Become Digitally Literate:** Educate yourself about digital literacy and responsible technology use. Simply, create healthy digital habits. Empower yourself to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

While this is not an exhaustive list of strategies, it is a good starting point in our quest to enhance our digital wellbeing. By implementing these strategies, we can cultivate a healthier relationship with technology and prioritize our well-being despite the demands of our worksites or academic life. Remember, achieving digital wellness is not about eliminating technology entirely but rather fostering a balanced and mindful approach to its use in daily life.

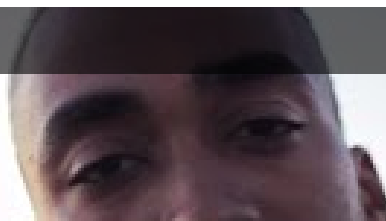
Adapted from Penn State University's 'Less Media, More Social' for Digital Wellness.

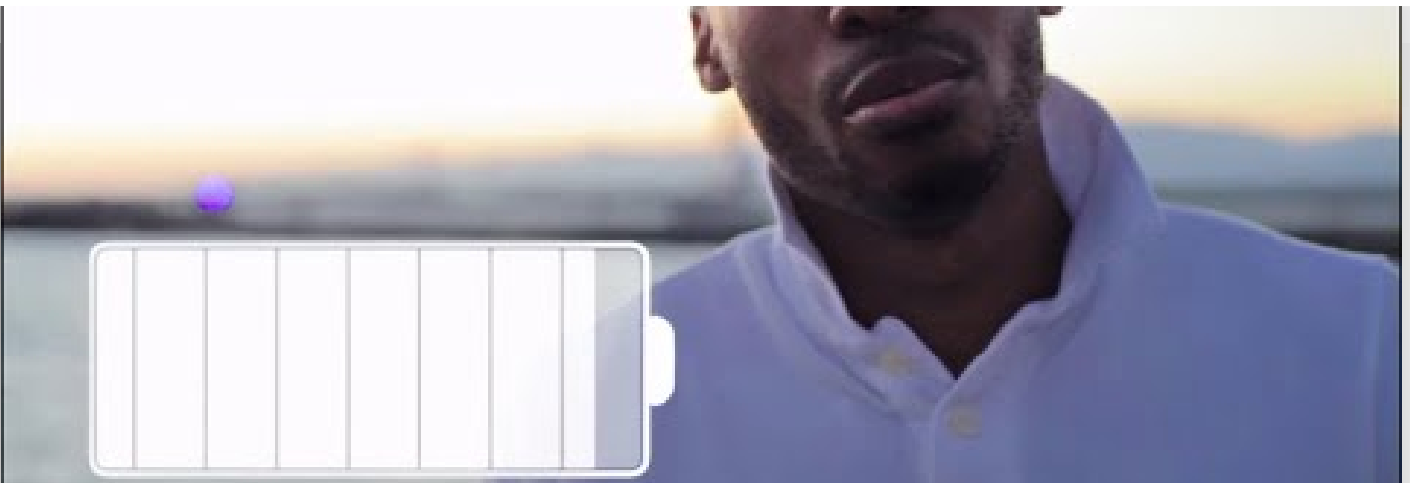
Additional Resources

Digital Wellbeing: Technology and our daily lives



Can We Auto-Correct Humanity? (2024)





Social media isn't bad: you're just using it wrong | Eva Amin |
TEDxCherryCreekWomen



Concluding Remarks

In today's interconnected world, where digital devices and online platforms are found everywhere, maintaining a healthy relationship with technology is paramount for overall wellbeing. Digital wellness encompasses a range of practices aimed at promoting a balanced, intentional and mindful approach to technology usage. Among the myriad recommendations for fostering digital wellness, several key principles emerge as particularly important.

First is the notion of setting boundaries. Establishing clear boundaries around technology use helps individuals maintain control over their digital consumption, while enriching other aspects of life, such as sleep, work, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, setting designated times for device-free activities or creating tech-free zones at home or during leisure time can be effective strategies for enforcing these boundaries.

Another recommendation for optional digital wellness is practicing mindfulness and intentionality in digital interactions. Mindful technology use involves being present and aware of one's actions while engaging with digital devices, rather than mindlessly scrolling or multitasking. Intentionality

entails consciously choosing how and why we use technology, aligning our digital activities with our values and priorities. Furthermore, prioritizing digital hygiene is essential for safeguarding mental and emotional well-being. This involves cultivating healthy digital habits, such as limiting screen time, practicing digital detoxes, and regularly auditing and curating online content to minimize exposure to negativity and misinformation.

Finally, fostering meaningful offline connections and activities is vital for achieving digital balance. Investing time in face-to-face interactions, pursuing hobbies and interests that don't involve screens, and spending time in outdoors are all essential components of a well-rounded lifestyle that prioritizes human connection and real-world experiences over digital distractions.

In conclusion, prioritizing digital wellness requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses setting boundaries, practicing mindfulness, maintaining digital hygiene, and nurturing offline connections. By adopting these recommendations, individuals can cultivate a healthier and more balanced relationship with technology, ultimately leading to improved overall wellbeing in an increasingly digital world.



Carlos Cervantes

Carlos is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters