

UNPLUG! How A Digital Detox Could Cure Your Health Problems

I have this one particular new client, let's call her Sarah. And Sarah has been experiencing some really challenging times in her life of late.

She's constantly exhausted and feeling completely out of whack, she's getting unbearable hot flashes, her mood swings are simply shocking, and no matter how many herbal supplements she swallows or candle-lit bubble baths she takes, she still finds herself lying there counting sheep at some ungodly hour. That's why she's turned to me for help.

Nothing ever seems to help her drop off, so feeling defeated, Sarah has been doing what most of us would do- she reached for her smartphone.

But what Sarah didn't realise was that this habit of habitually reaching for her phone could actually be worsening her health problems and not the other way around. *This* could be the true cause of her soaring stress hormones and disturbed sleep patterns and the very thing that is aggravating her performance at work and PMT symptoms.

We Love Our Devices

Sarah most definitely isn't alone in her screen-loving behaviour.

We *all* love the way our smartphones, tablets or computers' abilities allow us to connect with our friends, loved ones, and other like-minded people. And the way we can research any topic that springs to mind at the touch of a button. Or enjoy our favourite hobbies, or stay in touch with the news and views of the world.

We're now able to explore this world far more freely than we ever thought possible before the digital revolution. And it is wonderful.

But all of this technology also has a downside- we're finding ourselves more and more reliant on these things that are supposed to improve our lives. Shockingly, [an Ofcom report](#) from 2014 states that in that year, adults spent an average of 8 hours and 41 minutes per day in front of a screen. This is shocking! We are clearly becoming addicts.

But our psychological reliance on technology is only a fraction of the real problem: our screens are also affecting us biologically too.

Blue Light Damages Your Sleep

The blue light emitted by your device [damages your health](#). Period. This is *the* major issue when it comes to technology and health, but certainly not the only one.

You see, this blue light is different to the regular white daylight we are regularly exposed to. Not only is it artificial, but it also severely interferes with the circadian rhythms that control your sleep/wake cycles. And as a result, you find it harder to get to sleep and to stay asleep.

Additionally, this light suppresses your production of melatonin- the hormone which also plays a role in ensuring healthy, rejuvenating sleep.

Without high-quality, healthy sleep the human body just can't function. Any existing health problem will worsen, you'll be more likely to pile on the pounds, you'll feel exhausted, unmotivated and might even sink into anxiety and depression.

Multitasking Increases Stress Levels

Multitasking is also partly to blame for the negative effects.

Think about it- I bet you watch TV whilst scrolling through your Facebook feed, check emails whilst waiting for your train, look something up on Google when you were supposed to be catching up with your friends, and so on....

We rapidly switch from one task to another, demanding that our brains keep pace with our whims. And our use of devices makes this worse.

By asking our brains to constantly switch from one thing to another, we are putting our brains under great stress, and increasing the levels of cortisol and adrenaline in your blood stream. This doesn't just make you feel pretty bad, but it also affects the rest of the hormones in your body too.

Psychological Damage

The final problem is the psychological damage that over-use of devices can cause.

Whilst technology can be amazing at keeping us in touch with our loved ones, it can be quite isolating too. Without that vital face-to-face human contact, without the ability to look someone in the eye and form real human bonds, we are missing out on the beauty of real social interaction. We're neglecting our basic needs, instead of building them up, and psychological problems can often be the result

Nowadays, even when we're around other humans such as in restaurants, bars and on public transport, many of us are still head down, glued to our smartphones, and ignoring the world around us. What a sorry state of affairs!

Additionally, this constant exposure to media can also affect your self-esteem; even if you don't consciously realise it, you're constantly comparing yourself to the rest of the world, and judging yourself accordingly (and often harshly).

So what's a girl to do? How can we make the most of this awesome technology, but side-step the negative side effects? Here are my top five tips:

Tip #1: Switch Off Two Hours Before Bed

Stay away from your devices before bed to sidestep the negative effects of your device, and instead find a relaxing way to spend your time that doesn't involve technology. Aim to switch off at least two hours before bed, and if you really can't manage this, even 30 minutes will make a difference.

Tip #2: Reduce Your Screen Brightness

Just head to the settings page and turn that screen brightness down! You'll feel less stressed, enjoy better quality sleep, and maybe even reduce those hot flashes and dryness too.

Also consider installing some blue light reducing software, such as the popular (and free!) [F.lux](#), or [Twilight](#) if you're using an Android device.

Tip #3: Avoid Multitasking

The only way to get more focused is to *be* more focused. So stop scrolling Facebook or trying to do a million things at once. Practice the art of focussing on one thing at a time and your hard work will soon pay off!

Tip #4: Consider A Digital Detox

Hit the rest button by doing a digital detox. Steer clear of your devices for a weekend, a week, or even longer and see how much better you feel, how refreshing your sleep can become and how you feel younger, more energised and reconnected with the world.

Tip #5: Or A Digital Sabbatical

Just an evening away from technology will still be beneficial to the health of your entire family. Why not change your habits and switch off the internet during the evenings? Or put the phone away and pull out a good book instead.

With these five tips and a good dose of willpower, you can avoid the dangers of the digital revolution and ease a whole host of health problems, from insomnia, to hot flashes to stress and anxiety, and many more along the way.

Start putting your health before your device and watch how your life changes!