- Screen time / Mental health

Creating healthy tech habits

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TECHNOLOGY is an incredible part of modern life. It helps us stay connected with loved ones, makes work and learning more accessible, and offers entertainment at the touch of a button. It would be difficult to imagine daily life without smartphones, tablets, or the internet. However, with all of its benefits, technology also comes with its own set of challenges especially when it begins to affect our mental and emotional wellbeing.



Too much screen time, a constant stream of notifications, and the pressure to be available online at all times can lead to stress, anxiety and burnout. Fortunately, protecting your mental health in the digital age does not mean giving up your devices entirely. Instead, it means building habits that help you use technology in a way that supports your health and happiness. The goal is not to disconnect from technology but to reconnect with yourself.

A good place to start is by setting clear and realistic boundaries around technology use. Try creating “tech-free” zones or time periods throughout your day. For example, consider making your bedroom a screen-free space to improve your sleep. Avoid using your phone in bed, and try not to scroll through social media right before going to sleep or immediately upon waking up. Many people find it helpful to use a traditional alarm clock rather than relying on their phones. This simple change can reduce the temptation to check notifications late at night or first thing in the morning.

Mealtimes are another opportunity to unplug. Keeping phones and tablets off the table during breakfast, lunch, or dinner can make room for more meaningful conversations and reduce the sense of urgency that digital distractions create. When you intentionally remove screens from these moments, you allow yourself to be more present and engaged.

Being more intentional with your screen time is another important habit to develop. Most of us have experienced picking up our phone to check one thing and suddenly realizing that 45 minutes have passed. To break this pattern, ask yourself a simple question before using your device: “What am I here to do?” If you are checking the weather, reading a message, or looking

something up, do only that and then put your phone away. If you choose to scroll through social media or watch a video, set a time limit beforehand so that you do not lose track of time.

Modern smartphones offer tools to support these efforts. Tools like Screen Time or Digital Well-being allow you to monitor how much time you spend on different apps. You can also set daily limits or schedule screen-free hours. These tools are not about restriction but about awareness. When you understand how you are using your time, it becomes easier to make intentional choices that align with your priorities.

Managing notifications is another way toward digital balance. Notifications are designed to demand your attention, but when they arrive every few minutes, they can create a sense of urgency that disrupts your focus and adds to your stress. Begin by turning off non-essential alerts. Ask yourself whether you really need a notification every time someone likes a photo or an app sends a promotion. Most people find that they feel more in control and less anxious when they reduce the number of interruptions throughout the day.

You can take it even further by using features such as “Do Not Disturb” or “Focus Mode” during certain times, such as when you are working, spending time with loved ones, or trying to relax. When your phone is not constantly buzzing, you may find it easier to concentrate and more satisfying to engage in the moment.

In addition to reducing distractions, it is important to take regular breaks from screens. Between smartphones, computers, and televisions, many people spend the majority of their day looking at digital devices. Even short breaks can give your brain a chance to recharge. One simple technique is the 2020-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This can help reduce eye strain and give your mind a moment to rest.

Other than breaks, consider scheduling regular digital detox moments. These do not need to be dramatic. A 30-minute walk without your phone, reading a physical book, working in the garden, or doing a hands-on hobby can be refreshing. Activities that do not involve screens allow you to engage your senses and be fully present. Over time, these moments of disconnection can help you feel more grounded and less overwhelmed.

It is also worth remembering that technology can support your mental health when used intentionally. Apps such as Calm or Headspace can guide you
through meditation, relaxation, and breathing exercises. Music and podcast apps can offer comfort, education, or inspiration throughout your day.

The key is to choose tools that truly add value to your life. If an app consistently leaves you feeling anxious, frustrated, or inadequate, it may be worth reconsidering whether it belongs in your daily routine.

At its core, building healthy tech habits is not about perfection. It is about becoming more mindful of how you engage with technology and making choices that serve your overall well-being. You do not need to delete every app or dramatically reduce your screen time overnight. Pick one habit and build from there.

Healthy technology use is like any healthy relationship which is based on balance, respect, and clear boundaries. When you take steps to use technology with intention, you create more room for real connection, deeper rest, and greater peace of mind. Over time, you may find that you feel more focused, less stressed, and more in control—not only of your digital life, but of your life as a whole. ■