

DEFEATING DISTRACTION

It's easy to develop unhealthy tech habits without realizing it. The constant stream of information and entertainment can be overwhelming, leaving us feeling out of control. But just like with physical health, we can build good digital habits with a little effort.

Here are some tips to develop a healthier relationship with technology:

- **Make Your Phone Less Appealing:** Change your phone's settings regularly to make it a little less enticing to unlock. This forces you to be more conscious about using it.
- **Establish a Tech Routine:** Just like you have routines for your day-to-day life, create a routine for your technology use. Decide when you'll allow yourself to engage with your phone and for what purposes. Also, establish tech-free times to give your brain a break.
- **Set a Clear Intention:** Before unlocking your phone, take a moment to articulate what you plan to do, how you'll know when you're finished, and what you'll do after. This simple practice can help you avoid mindless scrolling.
- **Manage Temptations:** In high-stakes environments like classrooms or workplaces, consider removing the temptation of your phone altogether until you've developed stronger digital habits.
- **Start Small and Be Patient:** Begin practicing these tips in low-stakes situations. It takes time and effort to build new habits, so don't get discouraged if you don't see results immediately.

You can try these exercises to build better tech habits:

THE DO JUST ONE THING CHALLENGE

- Pick something you do with your phone that has a **natural end point**, like checking the weather.
- Unlock your phone.
- Close any apps that are open.
- Do **just** the activity you planned to do. Stop when you've reached the end point you identified (for example, when you know what the day's weather is going to be).
- Lock your phone.

APP TRIALS

- Pick something you do with your phone that has no natural end, like playing a game, scrolling your social media feed, or watching videos.
- Decide how much time you'd like to spend doing it (for instance, five minutes watching videos.)
- **Set a timer** going with that time.
- Do the activity until the timer goes off, and then **close that app** and put your phone away.

PHONE PENNY MARATHON

- Guess how often you check your phone every hour.
- Fill one pocket with pennies or other small coins or objects.

- Pick an hour of the day when you usually use your phone at least once, or set a timer for an hour.
- Each time you unlock your phone, move one of the pennies to another pocket.
- At the end of the hour, count the pennies in the second pocket to see how many times you unlocked your phone.

If you don't have any pennies or other small items you can use (or you don't have pockets), use this variation:

- Set your phone face-down in front of you.
- Each time you unlock your phone, put it down a bit further away when you're done.
- How far away from you is the phone at the end of the hour?

NOTIFICATION SPRINTS

- Choose **how often** you'll checking your notifications (for instance, once every hour, or once every half hour.)
- **Don't** check any notifications outside of that time (except for ones that are clearly emergencies.)
- When the time comes, check all your notifications, respond to any that need responses as quickly as possible, then put away your phone.

Remember, building a positive digital culture starts with each of us. By developing healthy tech habits, we can use technology in a way that benefits our well-being and contributes to a more mindful and respectful online world.