

# 6 Steps to Buffer Digital Burnout & Boost Vitality

There is little doubt that technology can be a source of happiness, creativity, convenience, and connection. When managed, it can add to your well-being and energy. Unfortunately, technology, particularly your phone, often has the opposite, draining effect. Here are six steps with strategies to help you buffer digital burnout and boost your vitality so you get the best out of your technology without it getting the best of you!

**1**

## LOOK IN

**Understanding where you are is just as important as knowing where you want to go.**

"Looking in" is about increasing your self-awareness to better understand what factors – or triggers – are driving your relationship with your phone. First, there are external triggers that come from your surrounding environment. For example, seeing your phone on your bedside table is an external trigger that prompts you to pick it up and begin scrolling, even when getting a good night of sleep would be the healthier choice.

However, just as influential are internal triggers, driven by beliefs, thoughts, and emotions. For example, worrying that you might miss a late evening email from your boss prompts you to look at your phone before turning off the light for sleep, even though it only adds to your stress. To better understand your triggers, EACH time you pick up your phone over the course of a week, record your answers to the following questions.

- **Where were you & what were you doing?**
- **Why did you pick it up?**
- **What was the impact of doing so on your focus, mood, and energy?**

Following a week of tracking, review your answers. Look for internal and external trigger patterns, common locations, and consequences. You will use this information to identify and implement the most helpful changes in future steps.

# 2

## ASK OUT

### **What is the impact of your actions on others?**

Many of us have had the frustrating and hurtful experience of someone picking up their phone while in a conversation with us. This experience has a name, “phubbing,” and is defined as snubbing others in real life in favor of your phone.

Unfortunately, not only are we often less considerate of its effect on others when we are the ones phubbing, but we are also unaware of how often we do it. The only way to truly understand how your phone use impacts your relationships is to ask others for their feedback.

Of course, some jobs or circumstances require more time on your phone, but engaging in conversations allows each person to share their needs and frustrations, suggest solutions, and then find compromises and make agreements for the future.

- **Your goal is to understand their experience so focus on asking questions and really listening versus blaming or defending.**
- **Where appropriate, own your impact and apologize. Remember, you can't change the past but you can choose different behaviors in the future.**

# 3

## THINK LONG

### **We tend to be more resilient and committed to change when we have a meaningful personal "why."**

Consider your relationships, health, happiness, and success. Imagining the future, reflect and record your thoughts on the long-term impact if you were (or weren't) to have healthier boundaries with your phone.

- **What might you gain (the benefits) if you establish healthier boundaries with your phone?**
- **What might you lose (the costs) if you don't establish healthier boundaries with your phone?**

## 4 **START SMALL**

**Small, simple shifts will always beat an all-or-nothing approach.**

Most people attempting to change behavior tend to take on far too much right from the start. You don't need to start with a 30-day digital detox. Instead, start small such as having dinner without phones on the table once a week. Adding small steps to small wins is guaranteed to be a more sustainable approach.

- **Based on all the tracking information you have collected, the conversations you have had, and the reflections you have captured, what is ONE simple, small change you could implement in the next week?**

Beware! Your brain will try to convince you that small changes don't matter. This is untrue. Shift your mindset to an "everything counts" approach instead of an "all or nothing" approach. Small actions, practiced consistently, have a significant and compounding impact over time. They also help build your confidence and create momentum so you can test, assess, add and adjust strategies when needed.

## 5 **PLAN INTENTIONALLY**

**Make the easy stuff HARD to do and the hard stuff EASY to do.**

In other words, the goal is to make unhelpful phone habits hard to practice and new, healthier habits easy to practice. For example, we often mistake proximity with necessity causing us to pick up our phone when we see it. If you are trying to stop checking email at night, make the old behavior of checking email in bed harder by removing the external trigger and charging your phone outside your bedroom. Make it easier to avoid the internal trigger of feeling the need to check you email by putting a line in your email signature informing people you don't look at email after a specific time in the evening. Even better, have a direct conversation with your boss about their response expectations.

The best way to set yourself up for success is to be intentional.

- **How can you make the old behavior harder to do?**
- **How can you make the new behavior easier to do?**

# 6

## SHARE OPENLY

**Don't expect people to be mind-readers.**

Once you have established the changes you want to make and the boundaries you want to put in place, sharing your plans with others is the last critical step. The benefits of doing so are twofold:

- **First, it allows others to help and support you, which is often the difference between a new change sticking or an old habit returning.**
- **Second, it ensures others know what to expect, particularly if your changes include new boundaries with response times.**

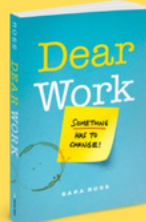
Although most people will likely appreciate you putting your phone away to be more present with them, others at work or other friends and family may initially find your changes hard, especially if they are used to your lack of boundaries and constant responses. When you share your boundaries, let everyone know that this doesn't mean there aren't exceptions but having boundaries helps everyone understand what to expect.

Setting boundaries is the easy part, holding boundaries is the true challenge. The key is that YOU also hold yourself accountable for following them. It will be hard in the beginning but grant grace and remember that when you do, you protect your attention, energy, and time, all of which will add to your success, strengthen your relationships, and help you live a fuller, happier life.

An often unintended but positive by-product of your commitment and courage to change how you engage with your phone is that it helps others reflect and adjust their behaviors. When we are all more intentional, we can create a vitality-infusing life, both online and offline.

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