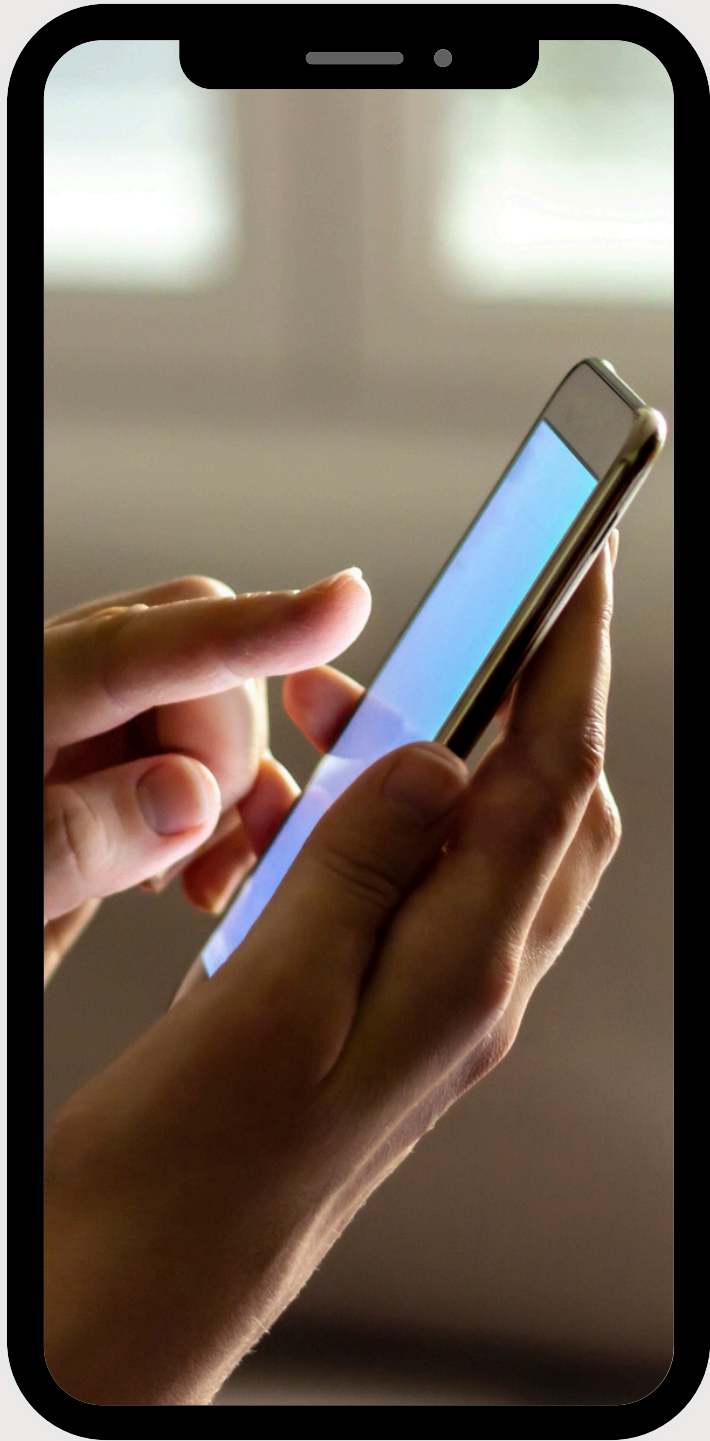




Digital Health

GVU TM **WELLNESS
PROGRAMS**



Digital Health



What Will Be Covered:

- Digital use self-assessment
- Why it's hard to put our devices down
- Impact of device overuse
- Positive device uses
- How to cut back on our device use
- Brainstorm alternatives to device use
- Goal setting



Digital Use Self-Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is not to bring shame or judgment about our digital habits, but to help us self-analyze and look for patterns and habits we might have with our phones or digital devices.

How soon after waking do you check your phone or a digital device?

How many hours of screen time do you think you get per day?

Do you check your device while talking to others, watching TV, or eating?

Have you ever felt anxious, restless, or irritable when you couldn't access your phone?

Has your phone use interfered with your sleep, work, school, or other responsibilities?

How soon before falling asleep do you put your phone or mobile device away?

How do you feel your digital use has impacted your life, for the better or worse?

Why is it so Hard to disconnect from our Devices?

2

NOMOPHOBIA or NO MOBILE PHOne PhoBIA is used to describe a psychological condition where people have a fear of being detached from mobile device connectivity. Recognizing the following reasons as to why our digital devices are so hard to put down can help us analyze and address the problem.

- **Constant connection:** Phones keep us connected to friends, family, and work at all times, making disconnection feel isolating.
- **Information addiction:** Instant access to news, social media, and search engines creates a habit of constantly seeking information.
- **Fear of missing out:** Worrying about missing important calls, texts, or updates increases dependence.
- **Routine integration:** Phones are used for many daily tasks, such as alarms, calendars, maps, and payments, making them essential tools.
- **Boredom avoidance:** Digital devices offer instant entertainment, making idle moments feel uncomfortable without them.
- **Emotional comfort:** For many, digital devices are a source of reassurance or distraction during stress or anxiety.
- **Social expectation:** Being available and responsive is often seen as a social norm, adding pressure to stay connected.
- **Loss of autonomy:** We often underestimate how much control our devices exert over our time and attention.
- **Dopamine hits:** Social media platforms and smartphones are intentionally designed to be addictive, leveraging psychological principles to keep us engaged. Features like infinite scrolling, personalized notifications, and algorithm-driven content create a feedback loop that encourages prolonged use. For instance, infinite scrolling eliminates natural stopping points, making it easy to lose track of time and engage in prolonged sessions. Additionally, personalized notifications about new likes, comments, or messages create a sense of urgency, prompting us to check our devices frequently.



How can too much screen time affect our health and wellness?

3

Potential increased stress, anxiety, and depression: Often seen when paired with excessive social media use, our emotional regulation and resilience are reduced when we are constantly subjected to digital engagement. Unrealistic online portrayals can encourage comparison and low self-esteem.



Sleep disruption: Smartphone use, especially before bedtime, is associated with poor sleep quality and disturbances due to blue light exposure and mental stimulation.

Physical health complications: Excess sedentary time spent on our devices takes time away from being active. This may put us at risk of developing certain preventable chronic diseases. Additionally, eye strain and carpal tunnel syndrome can occur with prolonged use. Device use behind the wheel greatly increases our chances of motor vehicle accidents.



Decreased attention span and increased distraction: Frequent multitasking and app switching train our brains to seek short bursts of stimulation rather than sustained focus. Over time, our ability to think deeply erodes, making it harder to stay engaged with tasks that require attention.

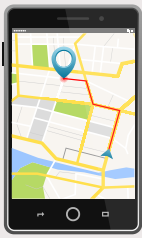
Social deterioration: Decreased face-to-face interactions can lead to social isolation even if we are digitally connected.

Now let's recap the amazing things our devices allow us to do. Remember, the purpose of this session is not to scare us into becoming digital cavepeople, but to help us find a balance where our electronic devices complement our lives, not control them.

Helps us to communicate: Digital devices allow us to stay in touch and involved with friends and family no matter where we or they are.



Provides information access: Digital devices and an internet connection bring a lifetime of knowledge to the tip of our fingers.



Aid in our daily productivity: Calendars and reminders keep our schedules in check, while banking and digital payments reduce the need to carry cash or cards. Additionally, GPS and maps help us to find our way.

4

Supports our health and safety: We can track our physical activity, heart rate, sleep and access emergency features.

Enables instant entertainment: Everything from social media and shows to music and games is all on our devices, giving us the privilege of immediate entertainment.

While our phones offer many great benefits, they can quickly turn from a tool to a disruption if we don't set healthy boundaries. Now let's go over some tips and tricks to incorporate that can help us cut back on digital device use.

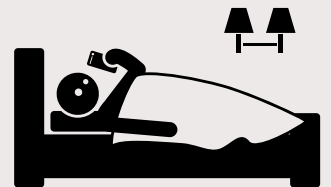
- **Eliminate multitasking:** Whether we are eating, getting ready for the day, or even going to the bathroom, we should completely enjoy and immerse ourselves in the activity without a digital distraction.



- **Ask “why” before pulling out our device:** Pause and think, do I need to use my phone, or do I want to? Differentiating between a need and a want can help combat impulsive behaviors to check a device when its not essential.

- **Set boundaries and stick to them:** Most digital devices have features where you can set time limits on certain apps and overall screentime. Set realistic screen time goals and try to gradually decrease them.

- **Don't sleep with your device:** Put your device across the room or in another room before bed. This will make you less likely to use it before falling asleep or check it in the middle of the night. Blue light emitted from devices can trick the brain into thinking it's time to be awake. Before bed, try reading a book or journaling rather than falling asleep listening to your phone.



- **Move phone tasks to a computer:** Designating social media or other distracting apps to a computer can limit their accessibility and therefore their use.

- **Commit to what we consume:** Be it a Youtube video, reel, story, or short, when you start watching something on social media, finish watching it. Avoiding partial watching and quick scrolling may help our attention span and get us off these apps faster.
- **Make our devices harder to access:** Removing face and touch ID and putting in a long password will make opening up our phone less convenient and in turn we may do it less.
- **Distance ourselves daily:** Even if it's only for an hour each day, physically remove your device from your person and go do something you enjoy. It may be uncomfortable at first, but with time you won't notice it's even gone.

As we begin to distance ourselves from our devices, shifting our point of view can help. Rather than centering our focus on what we're losing, put it on what we're seeking to gain, like clarity or connection. With that, start to brainstorm what you will do with this extra time. Here are a few ideas for alternative activities and ways to spend our time:

Read a book
Journal
Go for a walk
Meditate
Cook
Get ahead or catch up on homework
Converse with friends and family
Paint or draw
Practice or learn a musical instrument
Exercise
Stretch
Do a puzzle
Clean or organize your living area or car
Watch the sunset/sunrise
Volunteer
Go for a drive

Try a new restaurant
Scrapbook
Plan a vacation
Cloud watch or stargaze
Take a nap
Meal prep
Plan out your week at work or school
Bike ride
Memorize a song or poem
Take a bath or shower
Write a letter
Visit a museum or park
Play board or card games
Garden
Participate in sports
Go to a sporting event or concert

What are some things you can do in your free time?

GOALS

Now let's set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely goals regarding our device habits. We are all the more likely to follow through with something if we have a clear and concise way of going about it.

Short term goal (can be accomplished by the end of the day)

Medium term goal (can be accomplished within a week to a month)

Long term goal (may take months to years to accomplish)

Sources:

Georgetown University
National Library of Medicine
Santa Clara University
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