SOCIAL MEDIA_

WHAT TO DO
IF YOU ARE
WORRIED ABOUT
SCREEN TIME

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FROM THE DIANA AWARD

For many of us during the current lockdown, our phones, laptops and tablets have been a vital source of communication with our friends and loved ones, as well as a welcome distraction from the difficulties of isolation and troubling daily updates.

For the majority of young people, it's likely that technology is playing a pivotal role in continued learning, with online portals enabling schools to set homework and assignments and keep students engaged during this time. Before the global lockdown, social media and screen-time faced regular scrutiny and was the subject of serious debate on its effect on our mental health and sociability.

At The Diana Award, we regularly speak with staff, parents and students from around the UK and we hear these types of discussions frequently:

"Social media is bad for your mental health"
"Young people spend too much time on their phones"
"Young people are too concerned with how many 'likes' or 'followers' they have"
"Parents say we're on our phones too much but they're just as bad, if not worse!"

We also understand the link between social media usage and the potential to experience or witness cyberbullying behaviour, so if you have witnessed or experienced any forms of cyberbullying, you may feel the benefit of taking a break (Visit our Support & Advice Centre for additional support and resources).

So, whilst recognising social media's benefits, we have a few tips and tricks on how to balance your screen-time and take a healthy rest from social media and technology:

TOP TIPS

1. When you pick up your phone, ask yourself "Why have I picked this up?"

If you want a quick distraction to pass the time, consider another activity, like drawing or reading, that uses your hands. You can also ask: "What do I want to look at?" If you can't specify what it is you want to see and instead find yourself aimlessly scrolling through post after post with no real purpose, taking a break could be a good idea. Try getting your social fix by engaging in a conversation with someone around you instead - check in with them and ask them how they're feeling.

2. Think about the things you enjoy doing that aren't technology-based and make time for them

Are there any books you'd like to read or is there anything you'd like to do or make creatively? This could be anything from painting or sketching to cooking or baking. It could be practicing a musical instrument or a sport, singing or dancing. Or perhaps you want to try a new hobby like meditation or yoga. Imagine what you would choose to do if the world's internet went down; you might be surprised by what you come up with. Try scheduling time into your day for the activities that you love or have always wanted to make part of your routine and see how much you enjoy the break from your screen.

3. Turn off notifications

If you're not constantly reminded of messages or posts across the many social media platforms you use, you're going to be less likely to check them. This is also important to do before you sleep, as exposure to your phone's light has been linked to poorer sleep and less attentiveness when you wake up. Most of the latest devices have settings in which you can choose 'Do Not Disturb' for a set amount of time which will block notifications, calls and texts. Doing this one hour before you plan on going to bed could give you the mental break you've been looking for.

For further tips and resources, check out our Resource Centre.

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visitdiana-award. org.uk/donate

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