

## Detox

How many times have you found yourself in the dark, scrolling through [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) feeds until it's past your bedtime? Do you find yourself checking into your favorite social media platform multiple times throughout the day, or better still, insisting on taking a photo for [Instagram](#) before taking a bite, every time you eat out?

Do these questions describe you or a member of your family? You might not realize it, but social media addiction may have crept into your family's life. If you're looking for a solution for yourself or your family, try using a [Social Media Contract](#) to help regulate internet use on phones and tablets.

## Signs of Technology Addiction

It can be hard to know how much technology is too much. So, if you're not sure if you or your kids are heading towards a social media or technology addiction, consider the following signs, which can include:

- Excessive use of screens (TV, tablets, computers, phones, video games, etc.)
- Emotional or physical difficulty being away from your devices
- Relationship problems because of an overabundance of use

According to the [PEW Research Center](#), **54%** of teenagers surveyed said they spend too much time absorbed in their phones and **65%** of parents agreed about their kids' device overuse. And while we focus on kids' use of smartphones, we need to also look at our own digital habits.

If you or your family feels completely attached to social media, you're not alone, but you can learn how to detox from your social media addiction with these four easy steps.

### 1. See Social Media as the Distraction It Is

I get it, I really do. I sit in front of a computer screen every day, researching and stringing words together. My brain has difficulty spending hours writing, so checking social media becomes a diversion throughout the day. In addition to a mindless break, social media notifications float across my laptop screen, taunting me with bits of information.

There are times when I'm coming close to deadline or working on a project where I need to totally immerse myself for a few hours, and those times I spend without my browser open, in an effort to avoid distractions of any kind. In reality, I suppose I could do this more (as long as the piece I'm working on doesn't require Internet research). At the very least, closing all unnecessary tabs can help keep you focused on the task at-hand.

And don't think for a minute that you are alone with your social media addiction. Developers purposely create these platforms to make us want to keep coming back frequently. In fact, the very [developer who created Facebook's 'like' button](#), now uses parental control software (set up by his assistant) to block himself from downloading apps to his phone, in an effort to stay away from the draw of social media.

### 2. Turn Off Notifications

It would likely be a huge leap for you or your family to completely delete all of their [social media apps](#), allowing you to fill gaps of time with more meaningful behaviors. But if they're not ready to completely remove themselves from social media, it's best to begin by simply turning off notifications.

While I'm not sure how to turn off the notifications I get while I'm at my computer, I'm pretty sure a simple internet search would yield the answer. However, I do know how to turn off notifications for

apps on my phone, allowing me to spend time away from social media without seeing that I'm missing activity.

I challenge you to turn off your own notifications before proceeding to the next paragraph -- go ahead, take care of it right now while it's on your mind.

### 3. **Practice Mindfulness**

Now that you've turned off your notifications, take a moment to carefully consider *when* and *how often* you check social media. Set aside a day to purposefully track how often you find yourself checking social media. If you find yourself logging in when you're bored, make a note to fill that time with an interest you've neglected, or use that time to complete a small chore you've put off. I think you'll be surprised with your own social media habits once you take the time to track them.

For example, I find myself running late getting my son out the door each morning, and then end up starting my day in a state of anxiety. However, I use my phone as my morning alarm, and tend to spend the first 10-15 minutes I'm awake checking email (I have multiple accounts), trashing junk mail and spam, as well as checking social media. If I simply waited to get online when I started work a couple hours later, I could reclaim those 10-15 minutes.

Speaking of alarm clocks, I love *Real Simple's* idea of [purchasing an alarm clock](#) so that you don't start your day by looking at a screen. This tip is especially helpful for kids, as it encourages low-tech use and they can start their day without an LED light glaring at them.

### 4. **Enlist the Help of Technology**

If you're really struggling to help your kids stay off of social media, or if you need some help yourself to stay off, you can [install a parental control app](#) to limit your family's access to any social media. If using for your own accountability, enlist a friend or significant other as admin to help support you.

If going cold turkey is too extreme, then you can simply use the software to enforce time limits for your time online – this way you're not completely removed from social media, but the time on the platforms has defined limits.

While I am of a generation that remembers life before social media (and the internet), I'm still pleasantly surprised by how much better my mood is when I have a break from social media. Instead of being focused on others, my mind is on myself and my family, and I'm fully present in the moment. And the truth is, I haven't missed much when I check into social media a couple days later.

## **The Negative Effects of Social Media**

How can you know if social media is safe for your kids to use? While there are many pros of social media use, like increased connectivity and increased self-affirmation, there are also negative effects linked to social media use.

- Selfie viewing is negatively associated with self-esteem. ([Penn State University](#))
- Social media use is linked to greater feelings of social isolation. ([American Journal of Preventative Medicine](#))
- Social media can lead to a reduction in learning and research capabilities for students. ([International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering](#))
- Passive Facebook usage undermines a user's well-being. ([Journal of Experimental Psychology](#))

- Problematic social media use and [cyberbullying](#) perpetration (which was stronger among high school students) were directly associated with each other. ([International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction](#))

## Why You Need a Social Media Detox

A social media detox is one way to take back control of technology use in your family's life. It may be difficult, especially for kids who are used to unlimited screen time but taking an extended break from digital devices can help your children balance their tech habits.

Detoxes should last a minimum of 24 hours, but the longer it lasts, the more it reveals and potentially repairs. Consider trying a social media detox to help you take an important step toward fighting screen addiction.

## How to Overcome Technology Addiction

Technology is an ever-present, and often useful, part of your teen's life, and ultimately, it's unrealistic to expect them to completely eliminate their tech use. For parents, though, the how do you help your teen strike a healthier balance?

### Set an Example

If you're telling your teen you're concerned by the amount of time they spend online, then try putting yours down more too. Increased awareness of screen time, in general, will be beneficial for the family dynamics.

### Engage Your Teen in Conversation

Attempt to combat the effects of overexposure to technology by engaging them in thoughtful conversation. Ask what they're reading online or listening to and translate it to a real-life interaction.

### Establish Boundaries

Setting limits can be difficult for teens to do for themselves, so they may need some help from you to support them. Support them by establishing places and times in the house where phones and other connected devices are off-limits.

### Educate

Help your teen understand the risks and potential harm that overexposure to technology can have. Use the internet to research new studies and learn more about how screen time can affect kids.

By taking stock of our own habits, we can also understand how difficult it can be for our kids to break away from their screens too. If we set the example for them to [limit screen time](#) ourselves, we can promote a healthier balance of social media and technology use for our kids too.

For more guidance on managing screen time for your family, read our [Parent's Guide to Demystifying Screen Time](#).