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## Defeating your Digital Dependency

Feel like you are in a bad relationship with your smartphone? Anxious or nervous when you leave technology behind? You might be electronic, internet, or social media dependent. Read on for tips to take control of your concentration so that you accomplish your goals (or get your homework done!) without electronics getting in the way.

### What is Digital Dependency?

Digital dependency can be defined as the overuse of the internet or electronics to the point that one's daily life is affected. It can be divided into several different versions: phone dependency, social media dependency, and internet addiction just being a few examples. Sometimes, if left unchecked, digital dependency can be linked to clinical issues, such as depression, anxiety, social dysfunction, and other impulse-control disorders.

### Am I Addicted?

Just because you like to binge Netflix or scroll Facebook for a few hours at a time does not mean that you are addicted to the internet. It is important, however, to know your limits and how to focus on other aspects of your life (e.g. work, school, family, relationships, and self-care).

- **Recognize your triggers.** Do you reach for your phone when lonely? Bored? Stressed? Once you know why you're overusing technology, you may be able to find other effective ways of managing your moods and triggers.
- **Understand the difference between in-person and online.** Human beings are social creatures, and even though social media might make us feel like we are being social, it can actually be very isolating. Simple things like eye-contact, body language, and speaking to others in person can reduce stress and positively affect emotions.
- **What are your coping skills?** A lot of people turn to gaming, social media, or texting to blow off steam after a high-stress situation. If you are finding technology to be your go-to coping method, it may be helpful to find other ways to cope with intense emotional, physical, or mental stress (e.g. exercise, meditation, seeing friends/family).
- **Strengthen your support network.** Just like other dependencies, a strong support network can help you stay on track. Setting aside time for friends, family, and acquaintances, and doing so can help you feel less dependent on technology. Talk to people with similar interests, reach out to coworkers, join sports teams or book clubs, volunteer locally, or enroll in other enjoyable extracurriculars.

## Tips & Strategies:

- **Set goals for when you can use technology.** Set aside certain times of day where you can turn off electronics. Smartphones are handy when you are using them as a tool to socialize, organize your time, or connect to the internet. They are not, however, a requirement for fun or peace and quiet. Once you've completed a task (maybe chores, homework, or a good night's sleep) you can reward yourself with technology time.

There are also apps available that can help you monitor your time or set limits. Some examples are *Offtime*, *Flipd*, *Moment*, and *Stay on Task*, but other options might also be available that suit your specific needs.

- **Physically turn off your phone at certain times.** The physical action of turning off a phone might be a foreign concept to some people. When in situations that require concentration (e.g. driving, meetings, at the gym, eating, or with family) it's probably a good idea to practise turning it off. Even though bedtime might be your favourite time to scroll through Facebook, Twitter, or Netflix, it might also be the most harmful time for you to do it. Minimizing your screen time can reduce stress, anxiety, and headaches throughout your day and be part of a healthy bed-time routine.
- **Replace your smartphone with other activities.** Resisting the urge to spend hours on your phone can be challenging. Have a plan to fill the time, such as reading, socializing, or doing something that you love.
- **Remove social media apps/bookmarks from your phone/computer.** Making a page less accessible keeps your hyper-busy mind from thinking about it all the time. If you find yourself logging on to Facebook every time you open your laptop, set boundaries for yourself so that you remember to do other things first.

If you are worried about your internet, smartphone, or social media dependency, it is probably a good time to start seeking help. The **Academic Success Centre** can make suggestions to assist with time management, study skills, work-load, and concentration. For further assistance, feel free to visit UNBC's **Health and Wellness Centre**.

### UNBC Academic Success Centre

First floor of the UNBC library  
(250) 960-6367

### UNBC Health and Wellness Centre

Room #: 5-196  
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