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# Introduction

One of the most fitting descriptions of technology is that it's a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can be an awesome blessing. Today, we are able to do our banking and manage our finances online. We can order our toilet paper and other necessities with the click of a button.

We can expand our knowledge, research virtually anything, and explore the world via the internet. We can shop online for luxury products and compare dozens of brands and prices from the comfort of our homes. We can communicate with people halfway across the globe and stay in touch with loved ones... and much, much more.

On the other hand, there is a very sinister side to technology. It can be a curse that can destroy our lives. This is because it's very easy to get addicted to it.

When technology becomes an addiction that takes over your life, the consequences are no less serious than those related to drug or alcohol abuse. In fact, the scientific term for technology addiction is "digital abuse".

Today, digital abuse has become recognized in medical and psychological circles as a serious condition. Consider these three brief facts based on surveys:

- 81% of adults check their phones as soon as they wake up in the morning.
- 70% of adults keep their phones next to their beds while they sleep.
- 60% of adults admit that they have a technology addiction or are overly obsessed with technology.

Do you think that you or someone you know is addicted to technology? This book will reveal seven signs that indicate digital abuse. If you observe all or some of these signs, you need to take immediate action.

Digital abuse, if left untreated, can have serious mental consequences. The deeper a person gets sucked in, the harder it is to break the habit. Acknowledging that you have a problem is the first step towards confronting it.

Read on to find out what these telltale signs are and how regular digital detox can put you on the road to recovery.

# Chapter 1: The Consequences of Digital Abuse

Digital abuse may not always be taken seriously or considered a real addiction. Should it really be equated with drug abuse, alcoholism, addiction to pornography, or gambling? Absolutely. Because the seriousness of the consequences is the same.

The issue with any addiction lies in the control it has over you. It takes over your life so that almost everything you think or do revolves around it.

You are always craving more, even when you know it's harming you. The classic mantra "I can stop anytime I want to" is a sign that you need help. And it's a mantra that many digital addicts repeat to themselves.

Moreover, like any addiction, digital abuse has serious mental and physical consequences that are by no means trivial. These include:

## **1. Chronic stress**

Chronic stress is a killer, literally. It's one of the major causes of stroke, heart attack, high blood pressure, diabetes, and even cancer.

Just like drugs or alcohol, overindulging in technology makes you feel good. You don't realize that the constant overstimulation of your brain is wreaking havoc with your stress levels – and in turn, on your overall health.

Activities like frenzied gaming, multitasking with different programs and gadgets, even interacting on social media put your brain into constant overdrive, causing stress levels to skyrocket. Letting this type of stress build up can be catastrophic.

## **2. Anxiety**

One fascinating study found that the more devices a person is surrounded by, the more anxious they become. They feel a constant need to check email, alerts, messages and social media feeds in case they are "missing " something important.

Naturally, when anxiety goes untreated and becomes chronic, it will lead to more serious mental and physical health issues.

### **3. Poor posture**

Sitting at a PC for hours at a time, leaning forward to peer at the screen, or bending the neck over a phone can lead to serious posture problems in the long-term.

Obsessive gamers also tend to unconsciously tense their muscles or clench their jaws as they battle their way through a challenging level or try to avoid getting "killed". Again, not a habit conducive to good posture or health.

The most comfortable chair in the world, even a convertible stand-up desk will not be much help if you are spending most of your day using technology.

### **4. Isolation and depression**

Some digital addicts turn to technology to relieve feelings of loneliness. Instead, too much technology can actually increase feelings of isolation and depression.

A 2014 study uncovered a strong correlation between depression and the extensive use of social media specifically. Perhaps, because all the exciting things other people seem to be doing online makes a person feel more insignificant and inadequate.

## **5. Can lead to attention deficit disorders**

The constant stream of messages, images, calls to action, alerts and information bombarding the brain at any given moment are staggering.

The result will be an increasing inability to concentrate and a decreased attention span. In worse cases, this could lead to a serious attention deficit disorder.

## **6. Poor physical health**

The sedentary lifestyle of a digital addict will undoubtedly take a toll on their physical health. One major issue related to tech addiction is obesity.

Inactivity and lack of exercise will have serious effects on the immune system, leaving the body wide open to all sorts of diseases and infections

## **7. Weakened emotional health**

Technology addiction can lead to the weakening of social skills and the ability to behave normally in social situations. A technology addict feels more comfortable interacting from behind a screen and even taking on various personas rather than being himself.

Over time, emotional wellbeing, self-confidence and self-acceptance can be seriously damaged.

## **8. Sleep disturbance and weakening of cognitive function**

Technology addiction can lead to serious sleep disturbances due to the overstimulation of the brain. Cognitive function may also become impaired, including memory loss, short attention span, the inability to concentrate or organize one's thoughts.

In summary: A technology addict will typically be affected by at least two of these consequences. All of them may lead to very serious and chronic issues in the long-term if the addiction isn't curbed.

## Chapter 2: The Seven Telltale Signs

These seven telltale signs are red flags that should not be ignored. They indicate either the onset of a digital addiction or a full-fledged one depending on their intensity.

A person may display one, several, or all of these signs in varying degrees. But even one should never be ignored.

### **Telltale sign #1: Decreased productivity**

This is when your work begins to suffer because you are constantly being distracted by your technology. You check email while chatting on the phone. You scroll through social media while working on a presentation. You listen to music while entering data or filling forms.

You constantly disrupt what you're doing to check every alert and notification. In general, it's multitasking with tech while you work.

Missed deadlines, poor quality of work, and tasks piling are all typical results of digital addiction.

Sometimes, your declining productivity may lead to complaints by colleagues or reprimands from your boss. This continued downward spiral may even lead – God forbid - to the loss of your job.

This decline in productivity extends to all areas of your life with similar negative impacts. You may rush through household tasks haphazardly or neglect them altogether so that your family life starts to suffer. It can be rushing through homework and submitting poor, messy work.

When your productivity starts to suffer in these ways, you need to take action. The results this can have on your life may be disastrous.

## **Telltale sign #2: Irrational reactions/ panic when connectivity is interrupted**

Power cuts or loss of internet connectivity can be common in some areas of the world. For a digital abuser, they are a calamity.

When a tech addict is cut off or separated from technology, even for a few hours, their reaction is extreme and irrational.

It can take the form of panic attacks or distress that are often expressed in violent outbursts. Extreme behavior (such as calling up the internet provider or electric company every 10 minutes) may also be displayed. Violent.

Even if not actively online or using technology, the mere fact of being disconnected is extremely distressing and creates a sense of fear and insecurity.

These symptoms disappear as soon as connectivity is restored.

These symptoms may also be displayed if a cell phone or other gadget malfunctions or breaks down.

A normal person will remain calm and manage without until the issue is fixed. To an addict, the loss of connectivity it's like being taken off of life support.

## **Telltale sign #3: Trouble sleeping and poor sleep habits**

Intensive and prolonged exposure to blue light from digital screens severely compromises the circadian rhythm. This is the body's natural internal clock that regulates our sleep hours and the quality of our sleep.

It's not hard to see how digital addiction can affect sleep. Late hours, an unstructured bedtime schedule, and too much exposure to blue light will disrupt healthy sleep patterns.

These may include:

- Fitful sleep
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Tensed muscles or grinding the teeth while sleeping
- Not sleeping enough
- Waking up often during the night
- Being easily awakened by minor sounds

## **Telltale sign #4: Feeling out of control**

A digital addict will often feel overwhelmed and out of control for no particular reason. The cause is twofold.

First, the extreme mental exhaustion caused by digital overload causes them to feel overcome with confusion and overwhelmed. These feelings can be so strong that they lead to panic attacks.

Sometimes, the feeling is so extreme that they feel as if their world is caving in on them. These are signs of severe mental exhaustion and stress.

The second reason is that they actually are without control. Their addiction is controlling them. They are at a point where they cannot function without their technology.

They are caught up in a chaotic rollercoaster of shopping, entertainment, gaming and social media madness. They're unable to stop the rollercoaster or jump off and this is why they feel powerless.

But of course, like every classic addict in denial, they will never admit that.

## **Telltale sign #5: Strained relationships**

For a digital abuser, technology takes priority over family and friends. They will skip family events and other occasions, sometimes even eating meals in their room as they sit at their computers.

At social events, they will often offend others by breaking conversations to check their phone or reply to messages.

Over time, personal relationships can become very strained. It's not a nice feeling for a spouse to know that he or she comes second to technology. Parents and siblings feel hurt because they're being ignored and neglected. Friends feel that you are never there when they need your support and will become distant.

In extreme situations, technology addiction can lead to divorce or a complete break in family bonds and friendships.

## **Telltale sign #6: Trouble focusing**

A few years ago, multitasking was a hot buzzword. All of the time management gurus were hailing it as a miracle tool for maximum productivity.

Now, science is telling us otherwise. Multitasking can do more harm than good, and even more so if you're doing it with technology.

Multitasking allows you to get more done in less time. But the quality of what you get done will be poorer than when you give your full attention to each task at a time.

With technology, multitasking both distracts and overstimulates your brain so much that your stress levels skyrocket. Over time, this combination of stress and mental overload weakens your ability to focus.

You have trouble concentrating, organizing your thoughts, and enjoying mental clarity. Over a long-term period, this can actually hasten the onset of age-related neurodegenerative diseases like memory loss, Alzheimer's and impaired cognitive function.

## **Telltale sign #7: Poor hygiene and eating habits**

For a digital addict, appearance and personal hygiene become increasingly unimportant. The worse the addiction, the further they come on their list of priorities.

A digital addict may not shower, or brush their teeth regularly (in some cases, for days and in extreme cases, for weeks). They neglect their appearance, sometimes going out in wrinkled clothes, with messy hair and dirty nails.

The deterioration of personal hygiene as a sign that a person is very far gone in their addiction.



Likewise, digital addicts don't care about good nutrition. A pizza and soda eaten at their computer is a typical addict's regular diet. Add to that mindless munching on assorted snacks and sweets, and you have a case for serious weight and obesity issues.

Mindless eating is another telltale sign that digital addiction is pretty severe. It isn't always overeating either. A digital abuser can get so caught up in technology that they may under eat as well.

**The bottom line:** If you notice these telltale signs in yourself or someone you know, what can you do?

The answer is periodic digital detoxing, or intermittent fasting from technology. Read on to find out how you can do this.

## **Chapter 3: Doing a Digital Detox in Seven Easy Steps**

Digital detox is just like fasting, except that you abstain from technology instead of food. It's where you intentionally disengage partially or completely from technology for a designated period of time.

Whereas veteran digital detoxers can go for weeks without using technology, as a beginner you want to start small.

An hour a day for a week is ideal, after which you gradually raise the bar until you can withstand a full 24-hour technology fast. You then increase the time to several days, a week and so on.

The aim of digital detox is to give your brain a much-needed rest and allow you to spend time doing other things.

Hopefully, as you gradually wean yourself and acquire more moderate digital habits, you will continue to engage in more meaningful and enriching activities.

The end result will be the complete liberation from your digital addiction.

## **1. Unplug completely**

Let's say you're starting with a one-hour a day detox. For the duration of that hour, you will completely unplug or turn off every single digital device within your reach. This includes your phone. The chances of a major disaster happening specifically during that one hour are very slim indeed!

Plan ahead for what you will do during that hour, such as exercising, going for a walk or out for coffee with friends.

By planning varied and enjoyable activities that keep you engaged, your beginner's detox will be over before you know it. You will feel amazingly refreshed and rejuvenated.

## **2. Remove social media from your phone**

In addition to your one-hour detox, uninstall all social media apps from your phone - but for a longer duration. Try to go for a week for this one. Reinstall the apps for three days then repeat the process and uninstall for another week then two, three and gradually build up.

Social media really should not be on your phone anyway. Remember the good old days when cell phones were just for making calls, receiving calls and sending text messages? That should be your end goal.

When you limit social media to your PC, you will feel an amazing improvement in your mood and calmness of mind. Again, the world is not going to end if you can't check Facebook or Twitter every five minutes.

### **3. Intermittent internet fasting**

This is another powerful addition to your digital detox routine. Choose a day where you abstain from going online for a full 24 hours. It should be a day when you're not working if online activity is part of your daily job.

You can keep your phone on for important calls for the duration but you must abstain from any online activity, including checking and replying to email.

Taking a break from the constant bombardment of emails, advertising, social media and online gaming is a powerful way to start breaking free from a technology addiction.

As you progress in intermittent internet fasting you will notice an increase in your overall wellbeing as your mind cleanses itself.

Once you get the hang of it and experience the powerful benefits, you will want to do this more often. For example, over a full weekend or even when you're away on vacation.

Remember to plan ahead and fill your day with activities that will take your mind off your fast.

## **4. Disable alerts**

Make it a rule to disable all alerts when you are working. This is an instant hack that will help you focus better and improve your efficiency.

This should apply to any task you're doing, whether you're putting together an important presentation or cooking dinner.

This will gradually wean you from the need to reply to every email, social media post or message immediately. This is another obsessive behavior of digital addiction that you can gradually begin to tame.

## **5. Declutter your digital space**

Pare down your Twitter feed by unfollowing people that aren't absolutely essential. You'll be amazed at how many random and unnecessary follows you've picked up along the way. Unfollowing will give your brain less needless information to process and digest

Do the same with Facebook friends and groups that you may have impulsively joined but don't really engage with. Next, do the same with all your social media.

This decluttering process will cut down on alerts and notifications. It's also safer. We put out a lot of personal information on social media without thinking twice.

Narrowing down your social circle will keep you safe from scammers, hackers and other unscrupulous people.

In the same vein, do a periodic decluttering of your email accounts and unsubscribe from newsletters you never read. Delete all cookies and internet history periodically as well to keep your inbox free of pesky adverts and special offers.

Streamline your computer desktop so that's easier on your eyes as well as on your brain. Delete unused icons and shortcuts, unwanted software or programs and organize files so that they are easier to find.

## **6. Have meals at the table**

Having proper meals at the table with your family has several powerful benefits. First and foremost, it gives you a break from technology where your brain can unwind and calm down.

Second, it helps you be more mindful of what you're eating so that you don't continue to eat after you're full.

Lastly, it allows you to spend time with family enjoying some good, old fashioned conversation.

Try to make mealtimes leisurely and relaxing experiences. Set the table nicely and use real plates and cutlery instead of paper and plastic. Add a pretty touch like fresh flowers or an attractive centerpiece. Lay out the dishes attractively and eat slowly, savoring every bite.

These little touches will make you look forward to mealtimes and make it easier to detach from technology.

Try to make it a rule that all family members gather at the table for meals, or at the very least, for dinner if you have conflicting schedules. It's important that mealtimes become a warm relaxing experience that you look forward to.

Needless to say, do not bring your phone, tablet or other gadgets to the table!

## **7. Seek technology-free spaces**

When you are doing a digital detox, it may be hard to avoid technology when other people around you are using it.

For example, other family members watching TV, listening to music or playing games. It's important that you create a technology-free space in your home where you can spend time during your detoxes.

This could be a small spare room, your bedroom or any other space that is inviting and comfortable.

Catch up on your reading, meditate or exercise in your space and the time will fly by before you know it.

Invite family members into your space where you can engage in non-digital activities like singing, playing board games or reading.

When you're outdoors, avoid restaurants and cafes with big screens and Wi-Fi facilities. Seeking out technology-free spaces will help you avoid digital "cravings" and keep you on track.

**The bottom line:** Digital detox is very personalized. It's up to you how fast or how intensively you feel you need to go. Play around with the above detox strategy and create a customized digital detox plan that suits you.

There are two key things you need to know here. The regular, dedicated practice of these methods is key. Go as slowly or as fast as you want but practice digital detox regularly.

Secondly, you can be absolutely certain the digital detox works. It takes longer for some people than others but you will begin to notice improvements almost immediately. Recovering from a technology addiction is absolutely possible with digital detoxing.

## **Chapter 4: Proven Precautions to Avoid a Relapse**

Here are some helpful hacks that you can add to your detox routine once you have overcome digital addiction. They will help keep you clean and avoid the risk of a relapse.

### **Be mindful of idle time**

When you're in a doctor's waiting room, waiting for your order at a restaurant or commuting, don't automatically reach for your phone and start texting or chatting.

Instead, read a magazine, solve crossword puzzles, do a short meditation or mentally plan your schedule for the following day.

Be very mindful of these idle moments in your life and make the effort to avoid the lure of technology.

## **Use addiction-busting apps.**

Using technology to help you abstain from technology is counterintuitive but it may work brilliantly for you. There are a number of apps that can help you do this.

Use an app that helps you track your digital activity to make you more aware of your negative patterns. For example, there are apps that tell you how much time you spend on specific websites or social media, or how many times you checked your phone that day.

Other apps will alert you if you exceed the internet limit you have set for yourself. There are apps that will block social media and games for a self-imposed timeframe to prevent you from getting distracted.

Most of these fun and useful apps are available for free in the app store, so you have nothing to lose by experimenting with a couple of them. They may be just what you need to keep you on track.

## **Join a like-minded support group**

Interacting with like-minded people can be a great help because sometimes, willpower just isn't enough when it comes to overcoming digital addiction,

Joining a community of digital detoxers will give you access to loads of encouragement, support and advice. You can also engage community members to hold you accountable if you start lagging - or overwhelm you with praise and encouragement when you successfully reach a milestone.

## **Don't have technology for breakfast**

Develop the habit of not checking your phone and social media first thing in the morning.

Instead, have a good breakfast, go through your morning routine and delay the check-in for as long as possible.

It's is a great way to avoid brain overloading so early on in the day.

## **Stop being available 24/7**

It's easy to schedule email and message checks twice a day instead of every five minutes. There are small notifications you can use that will inform people that you will get back to them later in the day. In fact, this is now a policy in many companies. Managers discovered that employee productivity was decreasing because they were checking their email too frequently and disrupting workflow to reply to messages.

You can do the same with your phone. Notify relevant people that you will not answer calls during a certain time period. They should call during those times only in case of an emergency.

# Conclusion

Technology has countless amazing benefits. It's an integral part of our lives and there's no denying that it makes our existence immensely easier.

Technology is not going to go away, nor do we want it to. But we need to develop a healthy relationship with technology rather than a destructive obsession. We need to balance our use of technology with other things that keep us healthy, socially balanced and free of stress.

The key to a better quality of life for you and the people you care about is simple. It is to be fully in control of technology and never allow it to control you.

If you have a digital addiction, don't panic, You're not alone by any means. Digital addiction appears to be a growing curse in our societies. However, it's absolutely vital that you kick the habit before its negative consequences start becoming serious issues.

Use the seven telltale signs to determine if you have a digital addiction. By simply admitting it, you have taken the first step to recovery!

Create a personalized digital detox plan and watch the transformation happen. You will feel so much better that you will have no trouble making digital detox a lifelong habit.

**Are You Ready To Begin Your Digital Detox Journey?**



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