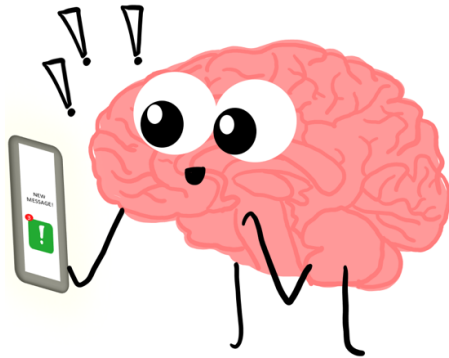


MOBILE/ INTERNET ADDICTION

Ever noticed how that little ping from your phone can steal your focus leading to **distraction** in an instant? It's like a trigger that sets off a chain reaction in your brain. The ping promises something exciting – a message, a like, a notification – a potential reward just waiting for you. Your brain releases a chemical called **dopamine**, giving you a rush of pleasure when you engage with that notification. It's a quick hit of happiness that can become addictive like **Instant Gratification**. You start checking your device more and more, hoping for that same feeling. This loop forms a habit that's hard to break leading to automatic and compulsive checking behaviour.



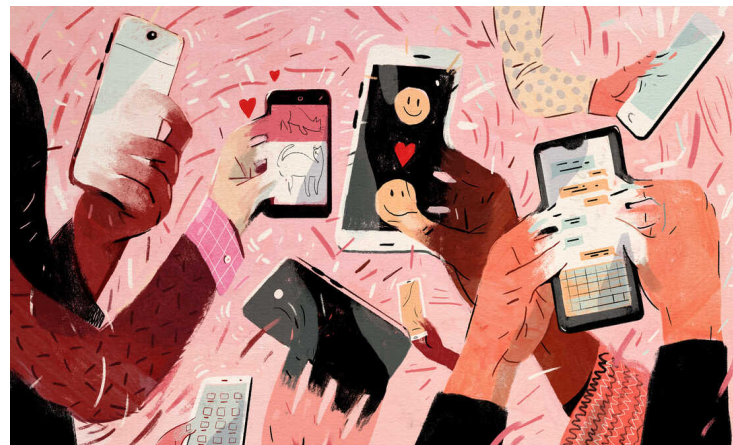
But here's the catch: the more you're in this loop, the less time you have for real-life moments and meaningful interactions. Understanding this cycle is the first step to regaining control. By recognizing the pattern and finding healthier ways to engage with technology, you can break free from the grip of internet addiction and enjoy a more balanced, fulfilling life.

ALGORITHM MANIPULATION-

Instagram and Facebook algorithms are designed to show you content that is tailored to your interests, preferences, and previous interactions. This personalization aims to keep you engaged by showing you content you are more likely to engage with, such as posts, photos, videos, and advertisements. The algorithms ensure that as you scroll through your feeds, you are presented with a seemingly endless stream of content that captures your attention.

This can lead to a "binge-watching" or "scrolling" behaviour, where you keep scrolling to see more content, often losing track of time.

This can also trigger a fear of missing out (FOMO), making you feel compelled to keep checking the platform to stay updated on the latest trends, events, or activities. Likes, comments, and shares on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook provide a sense of social validation and connection as well.



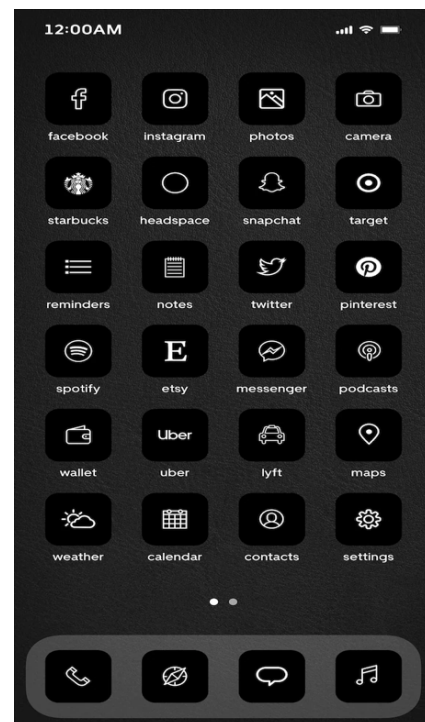
HOW TO COPE FROM MOBILE/ INTERNET ADDICTION:

Positive Self-Motivation: This can be achieved by setting personal goals, envisioning the benefits of reducing mobile/ internet use, and reminding yourself of your strengths and abilities. *Example:* You may motivate yourself by focusing on the benefits of reducing internet use, such as improved productivity, better mental health, and stronger relationships. You can create a vision board or affirmations to reinforce your motivation.



- “I am in control of my screen time and choose to use it wisely.”
- “I am confident in my ability to create meaningful connections without relying solely on screens.”
- “I embrace device diversity and explore fulfilling activities beyond my smartphone.”
- “I am more present and engaged in the real world when I limit my screen time.”
- “I am in charge of my technology use; it doesn't control me.”

Use Grayscale mode: Enable the grayscale mode on your smartphone, which turns the display black, white & grey. Imagine you're accustomed to spending hours on social media apps like Instagram or Facebook. The colourful visuals, and vibrant interfaces and captivating videos have a way of keeping you hooked, making it challenging to put down your phone. However, using grayscale can make your phone less visually appealing and become less tempting to use for non-essential tasks, such as endless scrolling through social media. This will reduce your screen time and regain control over your digital habits. Removing this will weaken the link between the behaviour of using your phone and the reward.



Limit recharge of Data plans: Try reducing internet usage by limiting data plan recharges to only necessary use. Be mindful of how you utilize your internet data and avoiding unnecessary consumption. Choose a monthly data plan that provides you with a limited amount of data. Avoiding top-up data recharges. Do not consider any extra data package even if your service provider offers you with attractive deal like a free subscription to a popular OTT streaming platform for a month. This can cause binge-watching shows late into the night, streaming movies during study breaks, and losing track of time while browsing the internet, productivity dropping, sleep schedule becoming erratic, and grades/ work suffering. Resist that tempting offer. A free subscription and extra data usage can lead to consumption of more internet data than you actually need, exacerbating your addiction and negatively impacting your life. It's important to carefully evaluate whether extra data packages or offers are truly beneficial for you, ask yourself:

- *Do I genuinely need this much data?* Assess your internet usage patterns. Are you consistently using up your current data plan, or are you often left with unused data at the end of the month?
- *Will this extra data encourage more mindless browsing?*
- *Are there healthier ways to spend my time and stay entertained?*

Avoid Procrastination: This can manifest in various situations where you might tend to avoid certain responsibilities or challenges by seeking refuge in the online world. Like- Procrastinating on important tasks by spending excessive time on social media, Escaping from uncomfortable conversations by retreating to online interactions or Escaping from stress, anxiety and personal challenges by immersing yourself in online games or streaming videos. Recognize patterns of avoiding certain situations or responsibilities by turning to the internet. Encourage yourself to confront these situations directly and develop healthier coping mechanisms.



Example: If you tend to procrastinate on your studies by spending excessive time on the internet, you can use time-management techniques such as breaking tasks into smaller, manageable chunks and rewarding yourself with health snack break or some social time.

Self-control: Develop the ability to exercise control and discipline & self-regulation skills to manage your internet use. This involves *recognizing triggers* (boredom, stress, loneliness, habit of mindlessly scrolling), practicing *impulse control* (pause for a moment and remind yourself of your goal to manage your internet use better), and being *mindful* of the long-term consequences of excessive internet use.



Example: Using techniques like the "10-minute rule", where you pause for 10 minutes before engaging in online activities, engage in a different activity such as stretching, taking a short walk, or doing a quick mindfulness exercise. Give yourself time to reflect on what is your priority, whether you genuinely need to use the internet at that moment.

Maintain Device Diversity: Mobile phones can substitute books, newspapers, TV, gaming consoles, computers, and a multitude of other tools. It's essential not to let our smartphones monopolize our attention entirely, so remember to vary up your mediums. Example:



- E-reader for Books: Use an e-reader or tablet dedicated to reading books, allowing you to enjoy literature without the distractions of a smartphone.
- Physical Newspaper: Subscribe to a physical newspaper to stay informed while enjoying the tactile experience of flipping through the pages.

- Alarm Clock: Use a traditional alarm clock instead of your smartphone to wake up, reducing the temptation to check your device first thing in the morning.
- Physical Calendar or Planner: Keep a physical calendar or planner to organize schedules and tasks, use sticky-notes for reminders, decreasing reliance on digital reminders.



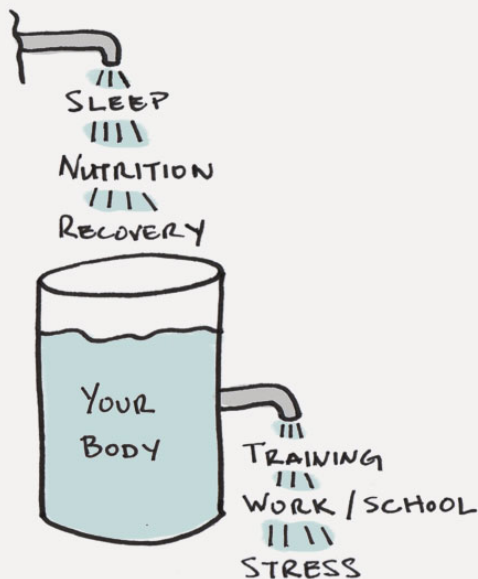


- Cookbook Collection: Explore cooking with physical cookbooks for recipe inspiration, providing a break from recipe apps on your phone.

- Offline Hobby Kits: Engage in hobbies like painting, knitting, or puzzles with physical kits or materials instead of relying on digital alternatives.
- Music Instruments: Play musical instruments like guitar or piano to unwind and create music outside of digital apps or platforms.



KEEP YOUR BUCKET FULL

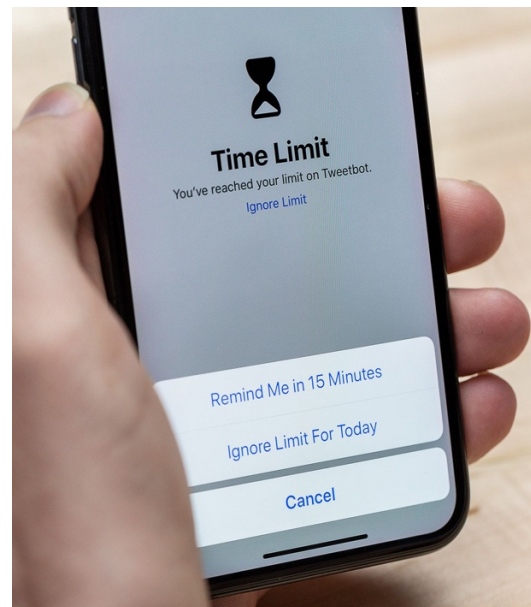


Avoid Escaping from Stress: Identify and minimize stressors that contribute to excessive internet use. Encourage yourself to implement stress reduction techniques and create a more balanced and relaxed environment. Try out alternative ways to cope with stress that do not involve excessive mobile use. This can include engaging in relaxation techniques, practicing mindfulness, or pursuing hobbies and activities that bring joy and relaxation.

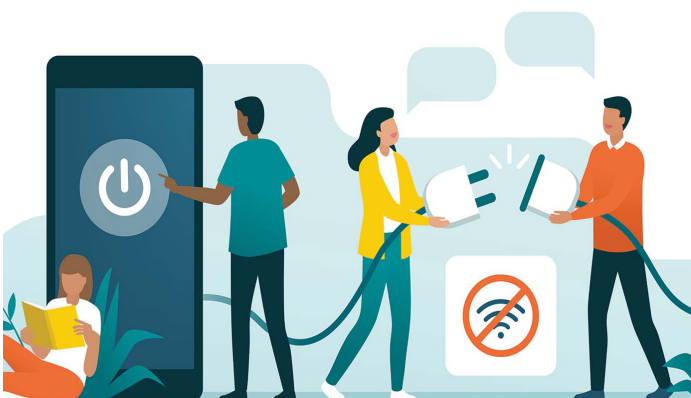
Example: Choosing activities such as yoga, physical activities, listening to music, taking a walk in nature, writing your thoughts and feelings in a journal regularly, engaging in art or crafts or talking to a therapist as healthy alternatives to escape from stress rather than turning to the internet.

Set Screen Time Boundaries: An excellent strategy to manage your smartphone usage is to limit your screen time and monitor how much you're using your phone across the day. Try to set boundaries and practice self-discipline when it comes to your social media and online interactions. This involves limiting the time spent on social media platforms and being mindful of the impact excessive use can have on their well-being.

Example: To adhere to the time limit, set a timer on your phone when you start using social media. When the timer goes off, it serves as a gentle reminder to wrap up and move on to other tasks. Setting a specific time limit for each social media platform use each day, such as 30 minutes for Instagram, 30 minutes for Facebook, 30 minutes for WhatsApp and sticking to it. This will allow you to maintain control over your online activities and prevent excessive usage.



Consider Digital Detox: During the week, you're like an emotional pinball machine responding to all the external forces- the buzzes, beeps, emails, alerts and notifications never end. Consider Digital Detox- whether it's for one day, a weekend or even longer, from using digital devices and technologies such as smartphones, computers and social media platform.



Shutting the smartphones off shuts out all those distractions. Give yourself a time-out from the constant screen time. By doing this you'll be making your time sacred again, reclaiming it. You stop all the noise. The days will feel much longer, and you'll generally feel much more relaxed. The unplugging may take some pressure off.

There's no fear of missing out or seeing what your friends are doing, It can be a family day. It's something to look forward to each week.

The social media feeds often make other people's lives appear more exciting or glamorous. If you're sitting at home scrolling, you're not having that glamorous experience, so it can feel a little discouraging. Some potential benefits of a digital detox include reduced stress, improved concentration, decreased anxiety, healthier social relationships, enhanced productivity, better sleep quality, and a greater sense of mindfulness and presence in the moment.



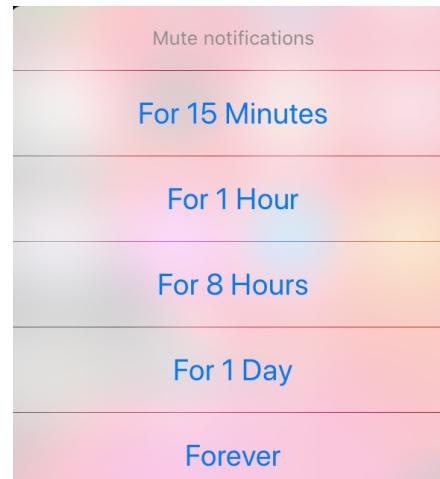
Establish Daily Phone-free Periods: There are plenty of moments during the day when your smartphone isn't necessary. Designate phone-free times to reduce digital distractions and create healthier habits. You'll notice that your phone dependency lessens while you spend more quality time with loved ones.

- Morning Routine: Start your day with a phone-free period. Avoid checking your phone for at least the first 30 minutes after waking up. Use this time for exercise or planning your day.
- Commute: During your daily commute to work or school, consider making it a phone-free zone. Instead use the time for reflection.
- Meals: Make meal times phone-free to enjoy your food and engage in conversations with family or friends without distractions.
- Productive Hours: Designate specific hours during the day as your productive hours, where you won't use your phone for non-essential tasks. This helps you maintain focus and accomplish important tasks.
- Social Events: When attending social gatherings or events, being fully present and enjoying the experience.
- Nature Walks: When spending time outdoors or going for a walk, disconnect from your phone and enjoy the natural surroundings.
- Wind-Down Time: In the hour leading up to bedtime



Disable Distractions: Notifications can be incredibly tempting and disruptive. Consider disabling alerts and notifications to resist the urge to dive into endless scrolling sprees. If you're worried about missing out on important updates, start by simply turning off the sound. Better still, while you're working, keep the phone out of your eye line because simply having your phone on your desk by your side is enough to impact your concentration and productivity.

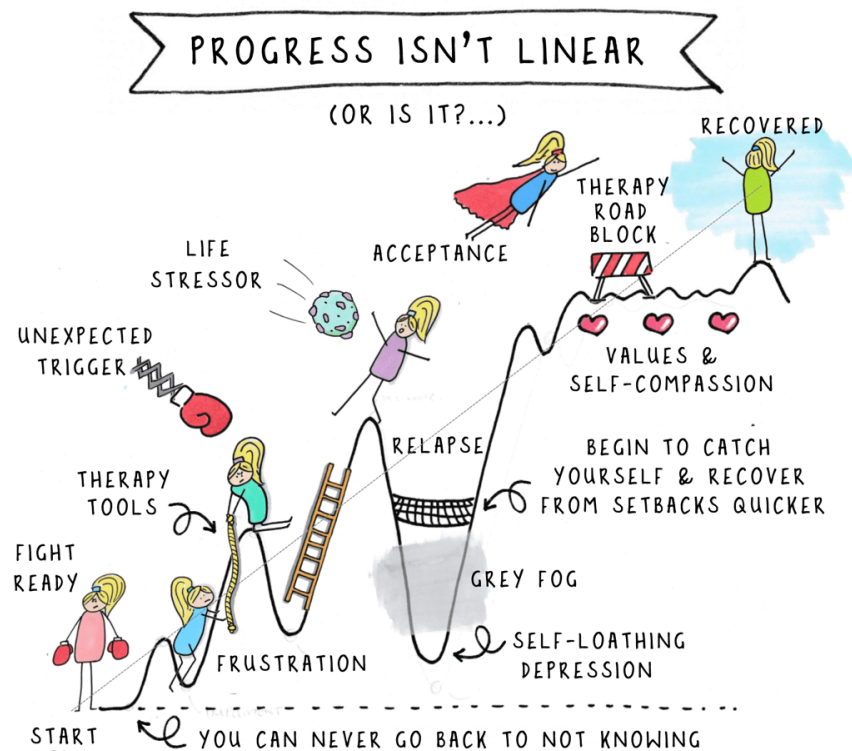
Example: You can turn off notification sounds and sets your phone to silent mode during study sessions. Additionally, you can place the phone in a drawer or keeps it face down on a shelf, out of sight. This way, you can reduce the temptation to check your phone constantly and therefore can create a more focused and productive study environment. As a result, you can manages to complete your tasks more efficiently and stay engaged with your studies/ work without unnecessary interruptions.



Seek out Friends beyond the screen: Seek out friends who rely less on mobile devices and enjoy engaging in activities that involve direct communication and shared experiences. Instead of just exchanging messages on various apps, you can plan a weekly coffee meetup with a friend during breaks at work, therefore bonding without the distraction of a screen. Prioritize face-to-face meetings as the primary mode of communication whenever feasible. When in-person interaction isn't possible, consider utilizing video or audio calls as the next best option.

Reserve texting for situations where other forms of communication aren't viable. Moreover, streamline your text conversations by selecting a single platform, such as WhatsApp or Instagram, to avoid the pitfalls of juggling multiple communication channels. The effort required to keep up with conversations on multiple platforms could leave you feeling scattered and overwhelmed and also disrupt your focus and productivity. Each notification becomes a potential distraction, making it harder to concentrate on tasks or engage in meaningful conversations. In cases where distance separates you from loved ones, consider setting up a video call to bridge the gap and make the conversation more personal.

Seek out for Professional help: If you find that breaking free from this challenge remains persistent, and its effects continue to disrupt your personal, social, and work life, reach out to a mental health professional like Psychologist or Psychiatrist for assistance. These experts are equipped with the knowledge and tools to help you navigate and manage internet/ mobile addiction. With counselling, you can gain insights into the underlying causes of your excessive internet use, develop coping strategies and work towards a healthier balance in your life. And if necessary, medicines should also be considered to fight against Addiction, Anxiety, Depression or any impulsive behaviour.



REMINDER: *Progress is not always linear and that setbacks are a normal part of the process.*

YOUR DIGITAL HABITS SHAPE YOUR REALITY, MAKE CONSCIOUS CHOICE & SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY!