



# Cutting down on screen time during Covid-19

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“How would we have managed before the internet?”

Beyond being a hypothetical statement, this question is relevant at a time when the digital age is ridiculed as the end of social skills as we know them. Covid-19 has seen society turn 180 degrees, almost overnight, from real-world interactions to the online space.

We have gone from mingling with colleagues, family and friends to being told to move our social interactions safely behind a webcam and sanitized keyboard. Internet providers and servers around the globe are being pushed to the limit as dinner tables become boardrooms and walls become screens.

We have to acknowledge the broad

term “screen time” can denote both positive and negative interactions with technology. Just as there are good and bad calories, so too, exist good and bad examples of screen time. It is therefore not helpful to use the comprehensive term “screen time” when discussing how technology use should be moderated.

Some of the contempt and concern associated with time spent on digital devices can be attributed to a fear of the new.

Swiss scientist Conrad Gessner was among the first to raise questions over information overload, claiming an overabundance of data was “confusing and harmful” to the mind. A continuous stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed.

You should seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from health professionals and the WHO website. Try avoiding listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable.

Try to avoid excessive exposure to media coverage. Constant monitoring of news updates and social media feeds about Covid-19 can enhance feelings of worry and distress. Consider turning off automatic notifications and taking a break from the news.

Setting boundaries to how much news you read, watch or listen will allow you to focus on your life and actions over which you have control, as opposed to wondering ‘what if?’. WHO advises seeking factual information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans

and protect yourself and loved ones.

Keeping in touch with your friends and family may ease the stress caused by Covid-19. Consider talking through your concerns and feelings to help you find ways of dealing with challenges.

Receiving support and care from others can bring a sense of comfort and balance. Assisting other people in their time of need and reaching out to someone who may be feeling alone or concerned can benefit both the person receiving support as well as the helper.

Many people may also wonder what to do if they are put under quarantine. Although the idea of self-isolation may seem daunting, keep in mind that this is only temporary and that there are always ways to regularly connect with others digitally.