

DIGITAL DETOX

The cleanse you didn't know you needed

In a frenzied, fast paced world such as ours, making a decision to go tech free might seem radical, or even impractical. Yet, more and more people seem to be recognising the merits of a life without tech, challenging themselves to go without it for a few hours or days at a time.

Millennials may have been the last generation to see both a tech free and a tech heavy life. Gen Z, clearly, has never known a life without it. Needless to say, both the age groups dominant in the workforce admit that they are now heavily reliant on technology for their work, daily lives and social endeavours. And it takes only a few hours without it to get them to realise, they are addicted to it too.

Despite all the benefits it brings, technology is draining. The constant work notifications, the pressure to come off as relevant on social media, the need to be "switched on" all the time — all of it can be exhausting and take a toll on the mind, even if we internalise the strain as part of modern life. Interestingly, however, the sheer unsustainability of this digitally saturated life is becoming evident in the rising cases of social media bullying, burnout from work, depression, and in some extreme cases, death.

So, what do you do then? How do you extricate yourself from the only sort of life you have known in forever?

Incrementally, that's how.

If you have realised that technology in such substantial amounts is bad for you and you wish to do something about it, you are already on your way to a digital detox. "I first noticed that technology was the culprit behind my exhaustion when I



lost my phone while on vacation — and appreciated the peace!" shared Fariha Toma, a 30-year-old freelancer. "When I finally found my device, I realised I wanted to use it much less. I understood I could just as easily enjoy sights without having to pull the phone out for a picture, and I could actually talk to people instead of listening to music all the time." Toma ended up making more friends and memories on that trip than ever before, and brought home a life lesson along with the usual souvenirs.

For those who depend on technology a bit too much, it may be easier to set small goals. Start with as little as half an hour and gradually increase to one hour or more per day. Pepper these goals throughout the day, such as the first half an hour of your day, the last half hour before bedtime and so on, as this will allow you to find pockets of time

when you know you do not have to use your phone for commute or work purposes. Let people like your friends and colleagues in on the fact that you are trying a digital detox so they know not to knock you unless there is a real emergency.

Understand that this might not be as easy as it seems. We rely on our phones for everything, from sharing rides to ordering food and groceries, checking the weather, tracking our appointments, and so on. "When I first started down the tech-free path, it was scary. I felt like an addict, wanting to reach for my devices every five minutes," confides Rashida Raimin, a stay-at-home-mom. "I really had to keep the phone in a drawer, well out of sight, to be able to concentrate on other things." Rashida mentioned she took up knitting to get her mind off the phone and now, she

goes hours at a stretch without needing to glance at it.

Despite the initial challenge, going tech free has several significant benefits. These include increased focus, better sleep and definitely much deeper human connections. "Scrolling the screen before bedtime is something we are all guilty and I can tell you, this is a difficult habit to kick," mentioned Annesha Raha, a dance and yoga instructor. "It seems mindless (and harmless) but the pictures, colours and sounds can actually be overstimulating for the brain." Annesha shared that once she was ready to wind down, she switched off her phone completely and over time, she has noticed a positive change in her sleep routine.

Fidia Mannan, an MBA student, found that putting down her phone and connecting with new people in her university has allowed her to make connections that would put LinkedIn to shame. "To think, all these resourceful people were right around me," gushed Fidya. "And where was I? On Instagram!"

Don't get us wrong — we love all things tech; there's simply no denying its benefits. And going cold turkey on it is neither sustainable, nor prudent. However, perhaps it's time we became a little bit more aware of how much time we spend on technology, how we spend it, and what we can do to reduce dependency. After all, it's not about forgoing it for good, but rather about knowing when to take a healthy pause from it.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

Marriage equality begins with the nikah

Marriage customs in Bangladesh often come wrapped in layers of tradition, ceremony, and unspoken gender expectations. But what would happen if a bride, right before stepping into the threshold of her 'forever,' decides to negotiate her role with sheer wit? In this short story, "Qubool?" a wedding in Dhaka takes an unexpected turn



when the bride's answer to the Qazi's question turns into a light-hearted yet sharp reminder that equality can start right at the altar.

The day was dated 14 December, 2018. A winter afternoon in Dhaka brought blustery winds that had people clutching shawls, sweaters, and jackets for warmth.

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