

DIGITAL DETOX



How to Enhance Your
Relationships, Mind, Body, and
Soul By Cutting Out Technology

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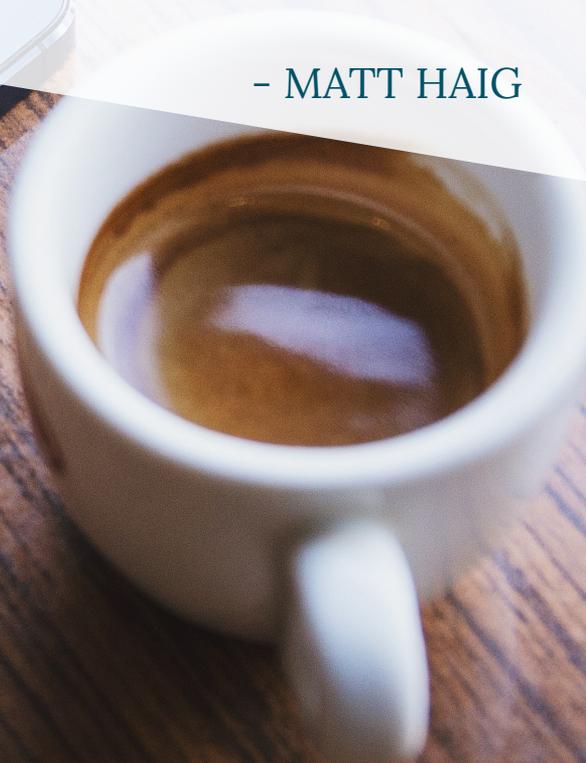
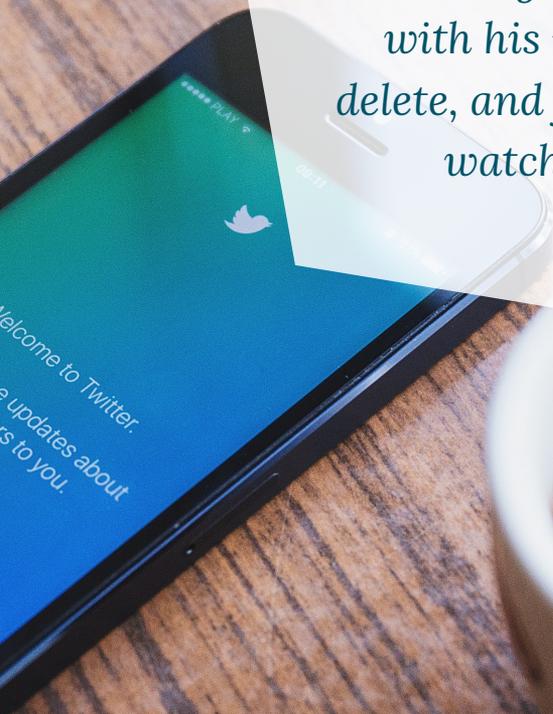
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“I stared at the tweet I was about to post. It wasn't going to add anything to my life. Or anyone else's life.

It was just going to lead to more checking of my phone, like Pepys with his pocket watch. I pressed delete, and felt a strange relief as I watch each letter disappear.”

- MATT HAIG



Introduction

Technology addicts and gamblers share a lot of similarities. They both believe that a particular behavior is likely to result in a reward, so they indulge in the behavior. They will do this even if there are negative consequences of the behavior.

The gambler is risking his financial stability. The technology user is risking his relationships, physical and emotional health, and largely wasting his time.

The same can be said for all addictions. **An addiction occurs when someone is highly motivated to risk more than the reward is actually worth.** Nearly anything can be an addiction when taken to the extremes. Even drinking water.

It's been suggested that nearly all behavior is controlled by a single chemical in the brain called dopamine. When the brain interprets a behavior as having a positive outcome, it releases dopamine and you're much more

likely to perform that behavior again in the future.

Do you love chocolate? Sex? The NFL? Romantic comedies? Blackjack? Dopamine is to blame. We don't actually love any of those things. **We love the feeling we get from indulging in them.** That feeling is the feeling of dopamine.

Technology provides experiences that are interesting, easy to acquire, and feel good. Checking your phone for notifications is like rolling the dice. Maybe there will be something good. Maybe there will be nothing at all. It's so exciting to find out for certain!

Social media is designed to hook you and keep you hooked. The deck is stacked against everyone.

Addiction to technology can be a legitimate addiction with real consequences. **It can sacrifice your health, relationships, career, and your overall sense of well-being.**

One great solution is a digital detox. This is simply avoiding, or minimizing, the use of

technology in your life for a period of time. It can be very challenging, but very worth your time and effort.

You can reclaim your life if you're willing to follow through and perform a digital detox!

Consider these topics as a way to learn more about yourself and your options for using a digital detox to enhance your life:

1. **Chapter 1: Signs That You Might be Addicted to Technology.** You probably didn't learn about technology addiction the way you learned arithmetic. You might not even know if you're addicted. This chapter will help you to determine if you could benefit from a digital detox.
2. **Chapter 2: Who is Most Likely to Suffer From Digital Addiction?** How likely is someone like you to suffer from digital addiction? You're going to find out in this chapter.

3. **Chapter 3: Top 10 Benefits of a Digital Detox.** What can you expect to gain from performing a digital detox? A lot. This chapter explains the many benefits you can expect to enjoy if you complete a detox and provides the motivation that you'll need to be successful.

4. **Chapter 4: How to Perform a Digital Detox.** This is where the rubber meets the road. You'll learn how to perform a digital detox and how to customize your plan to you. The basics are pretty firm, but the details are up to you.

5. **Chapter 5: What to Expect During a Digital Detox.** It's not all fun and games. A detox of any kind can be very challenging. This chapter will help you to prepare for the worst.

6. **Chapter 6: Ensure That You Don't Relapse.** It would be frustrating to do all that work and then return to your old behavioral patterns. This chapter will help you to keep your gains.



“We all need a technological detox; we need to throw away our phones and computers instead of using them as our pseudo-defence system for anything that comes our way.

We need to be bored and not have anything to use to shield the boredom away from us. We need to be lonely and see what it is we really feel when we are.”

- EVAN SUTTER

CHAPTER 1:

Signs That You Might be Addicted to Technology

You might think that you have your behavior under control with regards to technology, but you might be incorrect in your assumptions. There are many alcoholics that don't believe they have a drinking problem. Is it possible that you have a digital addiction and you're not even aware?

Fortunately, there are several signs you can look for before you jump to any conclusions. The more of these signs you have, the more likely you are to benefit from a digital detox.

Digital addiction has a variety of signs and symptoms, such as:

1. **Your attention wanders during conversations.** When someone is talking to you, do you ever feel the urge to look at your phone? Even

worse, do you actually look at it?

- Others are very sensitive to this type of behavior. Everyone wants to feel important. Choosing to look at your text messages instead of paying attention to the person across from you definitely makes that person feel irrelevant.

2. **You find that social media makes you feel depressed, anxious, or jealous.**

Social media can be a real punch to your ego. People are doing their best to impress the world and spread the illusion that their lives are better than they actually are.

- Naturally, your life pales by comparison. **Few things can make you feel more inadequate than spending too much time on social media.**

3. **Your sleep is inadequate.** Are you getting enough sleep at night? Is your sleep of poor quality? You might need a digital detox if you're staying up late

on your digital devices instead of going to sleep. Poor sleep quality can also be attributed to spending too much time on your digital devices, even if it's earlier in the day.

4. **Blurry vision.** Spending too much time staring at a screen can be bad for your eyes. If your eyes are watery, itchy, dry, or blurry, you might need a digital detox. Eye issues related to excessive screen-watching are showing up in the medical literature.

5. **You have a death grip on your smartphone.** Do you always have your smartphone in your hand? Are you not even able to put your phone in your pocket or your purse? This is a strong sign that a digital detox would be beneficial.

6. **You can't watch TV without also looking at your smartphone, laptop, or tablet.** Are you able to watch an entire movie without looking at your smartphone? Are you able to watch TV at all without scrolling through your

social media?

- If digital device use regularly interrupts any other activity, a digital detox is a good idea.

7. **The first thing you do in the morning is to reach for your smartphone.**

When your alarm goes off in the morning, do you immediately check your phone for texts, emails, or other notifications? This isn't healthy behavior, and a strong sign that you are a good candidate for a detox.

8. **Brain fog.** There's a correlation between screen time and brain fog. If you're having a hard time making decisions, or if you're suffering from brain fog, it might be time to give yourself a break from your digital devices.

9. **You feel compelled to use a digital device during meals.** Can you complete a meal without thinking about checking your digital devices? Do you leave your phone on the dining room table where you can keep your

eye on it?

10. **Others comment on your attachment to your phone.** If you ever receive comments like these, a digital detox is worth considering:

- Can you put your phone away and pay attention to what I'm saying?
- You're always on your phone.
- Did you hear me, or are you paying attention to your phone?
- Can you go anywhere without your phone in your hand?

11. **The thought of turning your phone off or putting it away for a few hours is stressful.** Could you turn off your phone, put it away, and leave it for a few hours? Or would you be uncomfortable doing that? **The more discomfort this scenario causes you, the more likely you are to need a digital detox.**

12. **You're overweight.** Excessive digital device use can contribute to weight

gain and obesity. If you've packed on a few pounds and you're addicted to your digital devices, consider giving yourself some time away from your devices. A detox might be just what the doctor ordered.

How many of these items did you recognize as being present in your life? **Even if you only have a couple, a digital detox can be beneficial.** If you have five or more, you'll be very pleased with the results you receive.

Keep this list of items handy for future reference. Relapse with any addiction is a possibility. This list is a great way to monitor yourself.

“The society is getting addicted to technology, especially social media, quite like one gets addicted to cocaine or pot. And it all works through the neurochemical process of reward and punishment.”

- ABHIJIT NASKAR

CHAPTER 2: Who is Most Likely to Suffer From Digital Addiction?

Interestingly, there are people with certain traits that are much more likely to suffer from digital addiction. **Having these traits doesn't mean that you're guaranteed to have a digital addiction.** It also doesn't mean that you're unable to overcome your digital addiction if you already have one.

However, it does suggest how big of a challenge you might be facing. Some people are simply more likely to become addicted than others.

The tendency to suffer from digital addiction varies from one person to another, based on these attributes:

1. **Your mental health status.** If you're stressed, anxious, depressed, or suffer from a variety of other mental health issues, you're more likely to be

addicted to technology. **In this case, it would be wise to enlist the help of a medical professional to treat the underlying issue.**

- Technology use is a form of self-medication, but it's not a cure.
2. **Low self-esteem.** Those with low self-esteem tend to avoid social contact. The resulting feelings of isolation can lead to excessive use of technology and create further isolation.
 - Addressing your self-esteem issues can be very helpful in combating digital addiction.
 3. **Access.** Imagine that you work in a top-secret facility that doesn't even allow cellphones on the property. Or, imagine that you live off the grid in the mountains. You don't have sufficient access to technology to become addicted. Unfortunately, most of us have nearly unlimited access.

4. **Boy or girl?** Females are more likely to become addicted to their smartphones, while males are more likely to turn to video games.
 - Males are more likely to isolate themselves, so video games provide an alternate world to explore.
 - Females tend to be more socially connected, so the world of texting and social media is often more appealing to them.

5. **A lack of social contact.** The internet and digital devices are a way of dealing with loneliness. Social media and forums provide a way of communicating with others.
 - **Peer pressure can also have an impact on digital addiction.** This is especially true in adolescents. If everyone else is on a social media platform, we want to be there, too.

How many of these items do you recognize in yourself? In one sense, it really doesn't matter. Your addiction is yours to deal with, regardless of whether all or none of these items are true for you.

The point is to understand how challenging it might be for you and to prepare yourself for the challenge that lies ahead.

“Television has changed the American child from an irresistible force to an immovable object.”

- LAURENCE J. PETER

CHAPTER 3:

Top 10 Benefits of a Digital Detox

There are so many powerful benefits you can enjoy from a successful digital detox. **A detox can be challenging, so it's important to understand the benefits you can gain from persevering.** It will make it easier to stick to your plan and complete your detox.

A digital detox can enhance your life in several ways:

1. **Enhanced focus.** Electronic devices are addictive and can rob you of your ability to focus on the task at hand. During your normal work activities, how often do you think about checking your email, text messages, or social media accounts? **The urge to engage with the digital world can be highly distracting.**

- You also won't be bothered by the endless bells, flashing lights, and other notifications during your digital detox.
2. **Better sleep.** The blue light emitted from electronic screens has been shown to disrupt sleep patterns. The information you view online can also be very stimulating and make it more challenging to settle down and fall asleep. You'll fall asleep more easily if you perform a digital detox. You'll sleep more soundly, too.
 3. **Longer attention span.** Not only will it be easier to keep your mind on your task, but you'll also be able to keep it there longer.
 4. **Stronger mental health. Studies have shown that the more you use your smartphone, the more likely you are to suffer from loneliness.**
 - Social media users often report feelings of anxiety and jealousy. It's hard to compete with the very best version of life that

your friends and family are promoting online.

5. **Increased physical health.** Too much time with your digital devices leads to weight gain, less exercise, and even neck and back issues from staring down at your phone for hours each day. Excessive digital engagement can also lead to excessive snacking.

6. **More free time.** Studies show that the average person uses electronic devices for two hours or more each day. That's at least 750 hours a year, and it's much more than that for many people. What else could you do with that time?
 - **Take a couple of minutes and make a list of the things you could accomplish this year with an extra 750 hours or more.**

7. **Enhanced relationships.** The time you spend on your digital devices would be better spent on your relationships. You can expect to see your

relationships blossom during your digital detox if you use the extra time available to you wisely.

8. **Less stress.** With more free time, enhanced physical and mental health, better relationships, better sleep, and all the other benefits of a digital detox, you'll naturally experience less stress.

9. **Your productivity will increase.** Increased focus, increased attention span, better sleep, and more available time will allow you to get more accomplished each day.

10. **Your social skills will have the chance to improve.** Without your digital devices to keep you entertained, you're likely to spend more time interacting with other human beings. It's very possible that your social skills could use a refresher if you've been spending too much time online or staring at your smartphone.

Which of those benefits would matter the most to you? Which are least relevant in your opinion? It's important that the benefits

be a motivating factor for you. Otherwise, you're likely to give up before reaching the end of your detox period.

Imagine yourself enjoying all of these benefits. **Visualize the person you will be after the detox is complete.** Keep that picture in your mind. When you feel the urge to give up, just return to that mental image.

“Be present to the people in front of you from moment to moment. Electronics and technology have a way of clouding our vision for the people sitting next to us. Uncloud your life, look around. Be present.”

- ERIC OVERBY

CHAPTER 4:

How to Perform a Digital Detox

It's time to get started!

A digital detox is a very personal experience. You're in for a significant challenge, but a great feeling of accomplishment awaits you if you're successful. **Even a moderately successful attempt will make you better prepared for a future attempt.**

Give it your best effort and see what you can accomplish.

Use these strategies to minimize the negative impact of technology on your life:

1. **Prepare yourself.** Know what you're getting yourself into. Watch a few YouTube videos and read a few articles. Know what to expect during

your detox period.

- Educate yourself, so you'll be prepared for what lies ahead. The more you know, the better your plans and expectations will be.

2. **Have a plan and set guidelines.** How long will your detox last? There are so many ways to do a detox. You might choose to:

- Eliminate or greatly reduce one digital item or form of media per week and progressively include one more each week.
- Give yourself one hour per day to use whatever digital device you choose.
- Go 100% cold turkey for 30 days.
- Cut back 50% and maintain that indefinitely.

- Set the rules and the duration for your digital detox. You're the boss. **Be reasonable, and you'll be more likely to experience long-term success.**
3. **Turn off all of your notifications.** Those pesky notifications will make your digital detox much more challenging. Eliminate every notification you don't absolutely need. The constant bells, whistles, and flashing lights will drive you bonkers and make you wonder what you're missing.
 4. **Restrict your access.** It's easier to avoid social media websites if you block your access to them. It's similar to going on a diet and removing all the junk food from your house. There are numerous apps that can be used on your smartphone and computer to eliminate your access to those sites.
 - **This will not only make you less likely to visit those sites, but it will also reduce your urge to want to visit those**

sites. It's harder to ignore the bag of chips in the pantry than chips that are far less convenient to access.

5. **Inform all of your people.** Give everyone a heads-up that you won't be responding to emails, text messages, and social media posts for a while.
 - Hopefully, everyone in your life will be considerate and supportive during this challenging time in your life! But seriously, you'll face less drama if everyone knows about your detox.
6. **Make social plans.** Spend some of your newfound time with others. Get out of the house and reconnect with the people in your life. You might even meet some new people for a change.
7. **Use a watch.** Looking at your watch results in fewer temptations than pulling out your smartphone whenever you want to check the time. Pull out the watch you haven't worn in

years and **reacquaint yourself with a classic wristwatch.**

8. **Visit the library.** Pick up a few books to read during your detox. Books can be both entertaining and educational. Why not learn something during your free time?

9. **Find a detox partner.** A detox partner can be a shoulder to cry on during your digital detox. Be supportive of each other. Call each other when you're feeling tempted to cheat. You might even make plans to spend some time together out in the real world.
 - When you tell everyone that you're doing a digital detox, you're likely to find a few willing volunteers.

10. **Decide how you're going to use your excess time.** Are you going to read? Practice the piano? Play boardgames with your family? Use your gym membership?

- Have a plan before you start your detox. Make a list of things you'd like to do or learn with the time you previously spent on your digital devices.

11. **Be strong.** A digital detox can be quite challenging. Expect to hit a few obstacles along the way. Remember that you can contact your detox partner. Have the resolve to see your detox through to the end.

There are no secrets when it comes to detoxing. Withdrawing from any substance or activity largely follows the same methodology. **You can tweak the process to best fit your life and your situation.** Spend some time thinking about how you can best achieve this goal and make a plan.

“Doing nothing means unplugging from the compulsion to always keep ourselves busy, the habit of shielding ourselves from certain feelings, the tension of trying to manipulate our experience before we even fully acknowledge what that experience is.”

- SHARON SALZBERG



CHAPTER 5:

What to Expect During a Digital Detox

Like any other type of detox, a digital detox has the potential to be rather unpleasant. You're likely to experience withdrawal symptoms. **The time you spend on digital devices is rewarding to your brain, so removing the source of those rewards will be uncomfortable.**

Before undergoing any type of detox, it's helpful to know what you can expect. Be prepared for the worst, and you'll be successful.

There are a variety of symptoms you might experience during a digital detox, such as:

1. **A strong desire to check your phone.**
This goes beyond a mere curiosity.
This is a nearly uncontrollable urge.

You might find that you want to check your phone more than you want to take another breath. The more you reject the urge to check, the stronger the urge can become, at least for a while.

- Solution: Sit with the feeling and really examine it. Where do you feel it in your body? How would you describe it to someone else? Just sit there and pay attention to it. **It will fade within minutes.** Now, return your attention to whatever you were doing before the urge struck.

2. **Irritability.** Whether you're giving up ice cream or a smartphone, there's going to be some irritability. Digital devices are often used as a form of distraction: Stressed from work? Play a game on your phone. Bored? Watch a YouTube video. Lonely? Check out your friends on Facebook.

- **When digital devices are used to avoid negative feelings,**

those feelings are going to be experienced when you detox.

3. **Physical symptoms.** The anxiety caused by your digital detox can create physical symptoms, such as:
 - Increased or decreased hunger
 - Sleepiness or insomnia
 - Headaches
 - Poor concentration

4. **Hallucinations.** You're likely to believe that you hear your phone ringing. Or, you might believe that you can feel it vibrating. Have you ever had a breakup, or had someone close to you die, and then thought you saw that person everywhere you went? It's a similar concept.
 - This sounds a little crazy, but **it's actually quite common.** The stress of not using your digital devices causes your brain to be a little confused about the sensory input it's receiving.

- Solution: There's not much you can do except laugh and return your attention to your previous task.
5. **A yearning for the internet.** It's not just your phone that you're likely to crave. It's also the internet in general. So much information and entertainment for practically free! Who can resist? You can - that's who!
- It can drive you crazy when you see others watching videos, checking social media, or reading the news.
 - Solution: Limit your time with those people in your life that have a strong addiction to the digital world. Spend as much time as you can with people that have little interest in digital devices and the internet.

See - that's nothing you can't handle! **One of the greatest skills anyone can develop is the ability to handle discomfort.** That one skill can be utilized in every part of your life.

The greater your need for comfort, the more chaotic your life will be.

Prepare yourself for these detox symptoms and stay the course. **You can do it!**

“The machine does not isolate man from the great problems of nature but plunges him more deeply into them.”

- ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

CHAPTER 6:

Ensure That You Don't Relapse!

So, you've completed your detox. Great job! It doesn't matter if your detox was for a day or a month, you'll certainly want to maintain your momentum and avoid slipping back into your old routines.

This can be the most challenging part of a detox! Just as it can be easier to lose weight than to maintain weight loss, it can be easier to cut back on your use of digital devices than it is to maintain that change.

The real work is only beginning. **You must be diligent in maintaining your digital "sobriety."** The good news, or bad news, is that you will have to continue using some technology. It's simply not practical to be 100% unplugged every day for the rest of your life. Our society is dependent on technology.

The key is to limit your use.

These techniques will help you to maintain your digital detox success:

1. **Acknowledge your results.** Make a list of all the benefits you've received from cutting back on your digital activities.
2. **Clean up your social media accounts.** You don't need tweets and updates from all of the people you're following. Clean up your friends and following lists to those that are truly meaningful to you. No one has hundreds, never mind thousands, of friends.
3. **Turn off all notifications for social media.** You can take a few minutes each day or week to get caught up. You don't need to be notified of every meaningless keystroke that's sent out into the abyss of the internet.
4. **Create rules for your usage of digital devices.** You might decide to spend one hour each day answering texts, emails, and surfing the internet. Or maybe it's a weekend only activity. Or perhaps it's 15 minutes a few times

each day. You might decide that video games are only allowed between 8PM and 9:30PM.

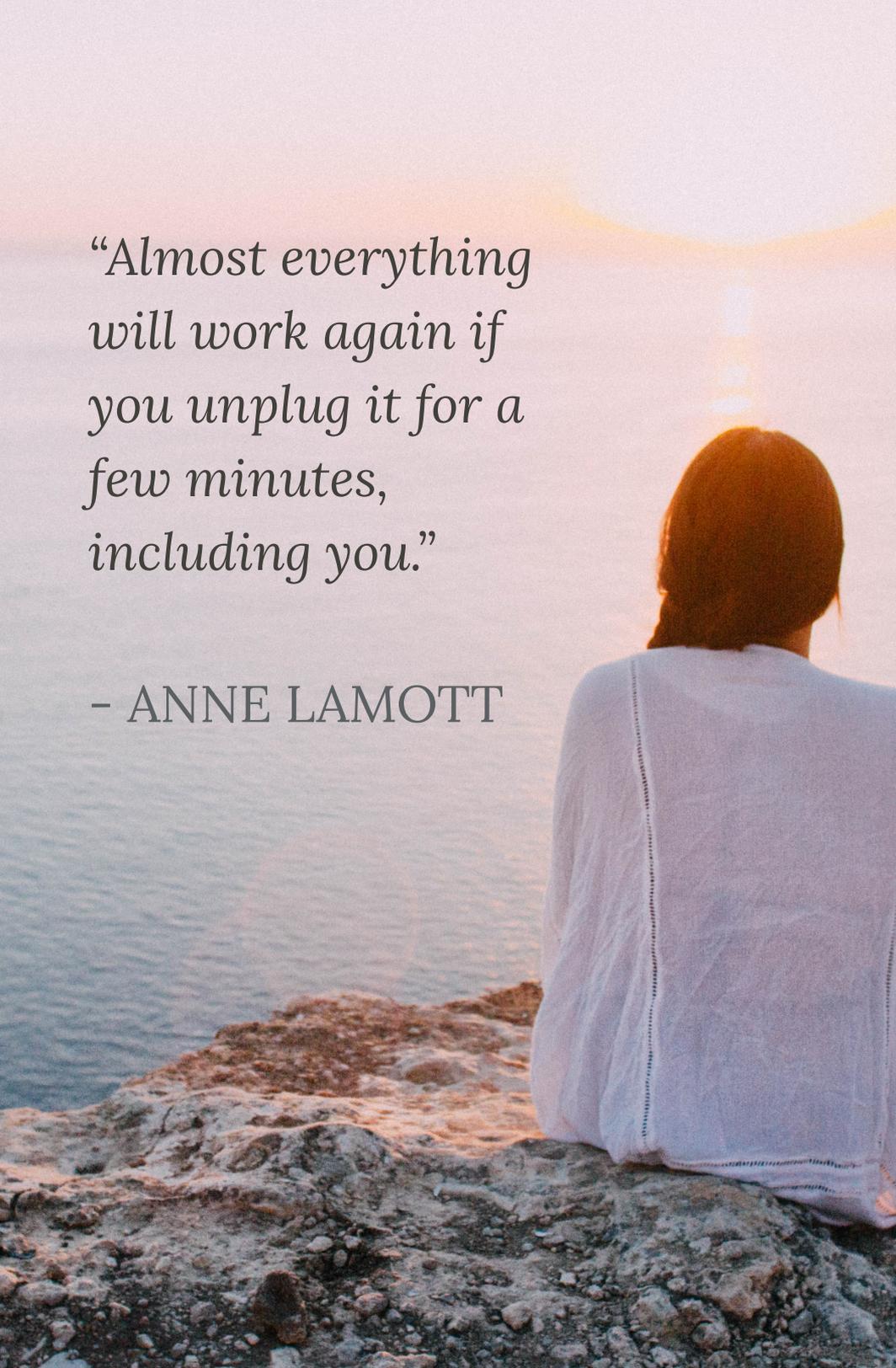
- **Create a set of rules that work for your life and hold yourself to them each day.**
5. **Put away your phone unless you intend to use it.** Avoid carrying your phone or leaving it out where you can monitor it. *You* decide when you're going to use it. Avoid allowing it to decide when you're going to use it. Refuse to be a slave to your phone.
 6. **Turn off your phone notifications.** Tell everyone to call you if they need to communicate with you immediately and that all other forms of electronic communication will be answered within a day or two.
 - **People will quickly stop bothering you with meaningless text messages and emails if they know you won't respond immediately.**

- Aside from your phone ringer, there's no other notification the average person requires. And even the ringer is unnecessary for at least 95% of all phone calls.

7. **Monitor yourself. The key to avoid slipping back into your old habits is to pay attention.** Are you breaking your rules? Are you highly motivated to use your phone or to get online? Notice when you start slipping and take the appropriate action.

Relapse is a real possibility. Have a clear idea of what you want your life to look like after your detox is complete. You can't stay away from all technology completely. What is an acceptable level of technology usage in your life?

Create a standard for yourself and hold yourself to it. **If you do suffer a relapse, think of ways to avoid a similar occurrence the next time.** Start over from the beginning and put your first detox experience to good use.

A person with long dark hair, seen from behind, is sitting on a rocky cliff. They are wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a decorative pattern along the side seam. The background shows a vast ocean under a bright, hazy sky with a large sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The person's hair is illuminated by the sunset light.

*“Almost everything
will work again if
you unplug it for a
few minutes,
including you.”*

- ANNE LAMOTT

Conclusion

Nearly everyone in North America could use a digital detox. **Most of us fail to recognize just how much time we spend on our digital devices.** Smartphones, social media, video games, and the internet in general are all highly addictive.

In fact, they're designed to be addictive experiences. The more we use these services, the more money the corresponding companies earn.

Our addictions put money in the pockets of those that are feeding our digital addictions.

One effective answer to this important issue is a digital detox. **Abstaining from digital devices for a period of time can reset your brain and your attitude about these devices.**

You have the opportunity to reconnect with the people in your life. You can use the extra time to explore an old or new hobby.

A digital detox can bring real detox symptoms. You might be moody, crave technology, struggle to sleep, or even gain weight. It's a challenge for sure. However, **the benefits far outweigh the temporary discomfort.**

Give it a try and see how you can enhance your relationships, mind, body, and soul!