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## Tips for Managing Social Media Use

If you find yourself often scrolling through social media or subconsciously checking your phone numerous times throughout the day, you are not alone. In 2016, Apple reported the average iPhone user unlocks their phone 80 times per day. That number has gone up to 150 times per day in 2021 (Internet Trends). Tech use in general, and especially social media use, has increased considerably in the past few years—one major reason being the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now more than ever, many people rely on social media platforms to stay in touch with friends and family. However, this convenient way of staying connected can come at a price. According to a 2020 systematic review, social media use can increase levels of anxiety, depression, and stress in some users (Karim et al.). It may be a good idea to implement the following strategies to help maintain balance in your life and limit screen time.

### Curate a Positive Experience

You only have so many hours in each day, so consider what is the best use of your time and mental energy. Try to make your social media experience a positive one. Follow users who you find inspiring or accounts related to specific subjects you find valuable. By curating your experience, you can avoid being overwhelmed with information that you can't apply to your life.

### Declutter Your Accounts

In the 2021 documentary *The Minimalists: Less Is Now*, Joshua Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus show the benefits of decluttering one's living space and living a minimalist lifestyle: freedom, happiness, and an increased sense of what really matters in life.

Apply this principle to your social media sphere by unfollowing accounts that don't serve you or cause unnecessary stress. If you notice there are certain users whose posts tend to cause anxiety, mute them for 30 days or unfriend them. This can, in turn, help declutter your mind. You are not required to stay connected to anyone on social media, especially people you haven't had a relationship with since high school.

### Engage Selectively

Many polarizing discussions take place on social media. You don't need to engage with or respond to every post you disagree with. Most of the time, you won't change someone's mind anyways. Often, it's best to just keep scrolling or better yet, stop scrolling. Engaging in hot topic discussions can quickly turn into arguments. Consider the real-world ramifications of doing so, such as losing a job, not getting hired in the first place, or having a falling out with a family member or friend.

**Find Ways to Decompress and Unplug**

If you are in the habit of checking social media each night before bed as a way to decompress, consider if this is truly helping you to relax. Could you replace the habit with something else? Instead, try reading a book, taking a bath, or watching a movie. If it helps, leave your phone in another room to avoid the temptation.

**Take a Break**

You could also take breaks from social media use periodically—whether it be for a day, a week, or a longer period of time. In a 2019 Stanford study, researchers found that people who gave up social media platforms for just four weeks improved their overall mental health and wellbeing. If you aren't ready to commit to a full four-week break, start by avoiding social media one to two hours before bedtime. Numerous researchers have shown that blue light exposure and overstimulation from screen use decrease the quantity and quality of sleep.