

Give your brain a break

– your mind and body will thank you for it!

Technology is deeply woven into our daily lives, offering convenience and keeping us connected with family and friends. It's also a critical tool for work and productivity. As our reliance on devices has grown, research suggests that excessive use can affect memory, attention, concentration and emotional regulation.

The cognitive burden imposed by constant multitasking and rapid switching between tasks can lead to cognitive overload, diminishing our ability to think critically, focus and retain information.

Achieving a healthy balance with technology is essential for protecting our mental wellbeing, fostering creativity, and building meaningful connections. Here are some practical strategies to create a balance with technology use:

1. Create Tech-Free Zones

Establishing tech-free zones in your home or workplace is a simple but impactful way to give yourself a break from constant stimulation. Having designated times, or areas without technology frees up space for conversation, relaxation and meaningful connection.



Creating a Tech-Free Zone:

- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Establish rules for tech-free areas, such as no phones or devices at the dining table or during family gatherings. This enables uninterrupted conversations and quality time.
- **Encourage Alternative Activities:** Replace screen time with engaging options like board games, puzzles, or craft projects. These activities have the added benefit of stimulating cognitive and creative skills.
- **Make it a Family Effort:** Involve everyone in the household by setting shared goals for tech-free times, such as family game nights or device-free evenings.



2. Power Down in the Bedroom

Exposure to blue light from screens and devices for more than eight hours a day disrupts your circadian rhythm, impairing sleep quality and reducing sleep duration. Some ideas to support you powering down:



- **Remove technology from your room:** Whether it's a TV, or charging your device removes the temptation to engage with them. If you are on call, consider removing non-essential notifications rather than removing your phone from the room all together.
- **Keeping a notepad by your bed:** If you find yourself distracted by thoughts when trying to fall asleep, consider keeping a notepad by your bed to jot down thoughts instead of reaching for your phone.
- **Establishing a bedtime ritual:** A cup of herbal tea, reading a physical book or practicing meditation can be helpful routines to implement to help your brain to power down.

3. Try a Tech-Free Day – or part day!

Challenge yourself to go a full day without screens. Use this time to reconnect with hobbies, spend time outdoors, or engage in face-to-face interactions. A digital-free day can serve as a powerful reset, reminding you of the richness of life beyond the digital walls.

Going tech-free for a full day might be impossible, so start off with an hour or so and build to half a day where possible. Even if you can't leave the phone at home, try to avoid the urge to grab and scroll, fill those moments with something 'screen free' instead. Here are a few ideas:



- **Little jobs:** Have you been putting things off around the house such as cleaning out the wardrobe and donating things to the opshop, or are there projects sitting unfinished in the shed? Take 30 minutes to create a list and set a goal of ticking one off a week during your tech-free time.
- **Bingo Card:** Are there things you'd like to try, but haven't made time for? A pottery class, a hike, braving the ocean in summer. Create a bingo card and set a goal of completing it by the end of the year.
- **Simple things:** Plan a bush walk, or a picnic with friends, try a new recipe or bake something from scratch with the family.



4. Train Your Brain

Dedicating time to activities that need sustained attention, such as reading a book, solving puzzles, or journaling will not only strengthen cognitive abilities and improve focus, it also encourages creativity and deeper thinking. Perhaps try:



- **Puzzles:** Sudoku, chess, or memory games sharpen your problem-solving skills and boost mental agility.
- **Creative Hobbies:** Explore hobbies like wood work, painting, writing, photography, or craft. These activities encourage mindfulness while also stimulating your brain.
- **Physical Books:** Dedicate time to reading. Sustained attention helps improve comprehension and critical thinking.
- **Journaling:** Writing down your thoughts or reflections can enhance focus, organise your ideas, and provide an outlet.

5. Take Time to Be Alone with Your Thoughts

When was the last time you sat quietly without distractions? Stepping away from technology allows your brain to reset, improving focus and emotional regulation through processing thoughts more deeply.

- **Practising Mindful Breathing:** Techniques like box breathing (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4) or slow, controlled breathing can help reset your thoughts and reduce stress.
- **Take a Phone-Free Walk:** Spend time outdoors without your phone. Whether it's a bushwalk, a stroll in the park, or simply sitting in your backyard, enjoy the sights and sounds of nature to ground yourself.
- **Let Your Mind Wander:** Sit quietly and allow your thoughts to flow naturally. If this feels challenging, find a peaceful spot to simply observe your surroundings and watch the world go by.



By incorporating some of these strategies into your daily routine, you can reduce the negative effects of excessive technology use, protect your cognitive health, and create space for deeper thinking, creativity, and connection.

Sources

[Mindfulness improves focus, memory, and emotional regulation](#)
[Digital media overuse impacts brain development](#)

[Reducing screen time improves sleep quality](#)
[Digital detox improves mental clarity and focus](#)



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