

FAIRPORT WEALTH



Challenge Yourself and Unplug for a Week

By Susan Reynolds

Interested in seeing the impact that even a short period of less technology and more solitude can have on your mind and body? Here's a five-day challenge of more mindfulness and less plugging in that may be just what you need.

A **MINDFUL MONDAY MORNING** is when you wake up think about what you're grateful for, or looking forward to, or what you want to accomplish that day, rather than instinctively reading a text or an email.

It's so easy to wake up on a Monday morning, reach for your phone and shift out of weekend mode to work mode subconsciously without setting your own tone for the day. One practice to begin is one of gratitude. When you wake up think about what you're grateful for, or looking forward to, or what you want to accomplish that day, rather than instinctively reading a text or an email. Then notice any differences throughout the day.

If you want to take it a step further, you can think about your gratitude and then spend a few minutes in mindful meditation, or quiet solitude, or simply drinking your juice or coffee without doing anything else. Easier said than done, and seemingly so simple, but if you're used to jumping into the day without taking those few moments with yourself, it can be a challenge.

INTENTIONAL TECH TUESDAY is when you take a mindful break from your phone or computer. You can do it once or several times over the day, but take at least 5 intentional minutes away from technology.

One suggestion is when you put your phone down or step away from your computer, go find a quiet place. Sit quietly and look around you. When was the last time you experienced silence, solitude and stillness? Now close your eyes and pay attention to your breath. Then your feet on the ground. Then your thoughts. If you get carried away with a thought, notice where it took you. Was it a creative thought that had time to emerge away from other sources. Now bring your attention back to your breath and your feet. Notice any changes that begin to occur during this time. Consider how often you are away from some type of external stimulus during your busy day.

One of the drawbacks of a 24/7 connected life is the lack of opportunity to be alone with ourselves, a time with no external input. When we walk in nature, we often take a phone for GPS directions or to take pictures. When we go for a run, we wear headphones to listen to music or a podcast or check our exercise statistics. When we wait in line, we use the time to catch up on emails and texts.

DIGITALLY WELL WEDNESDAY is when each time you use your phone you think about your posture, where your shoulders are and whether you are straining your neck? Sit up. Feel your feet on the floor, your back against the chair or supported by your spine. Where are your hands? Be overly aware of your body all day.

Have you heard of “Tech Neck?” It’s becoming a real thing. How many times have you noticed yourself hunched over your computer or your phone? When you become aware, sit up straight and breathe very deeply. The other problem with using a phone or computer is the way you shorten your breath. When you are not able to take in full breaths, you put your nervous system on high alert, shortening the rest and relax response that comes from full deep breaths.

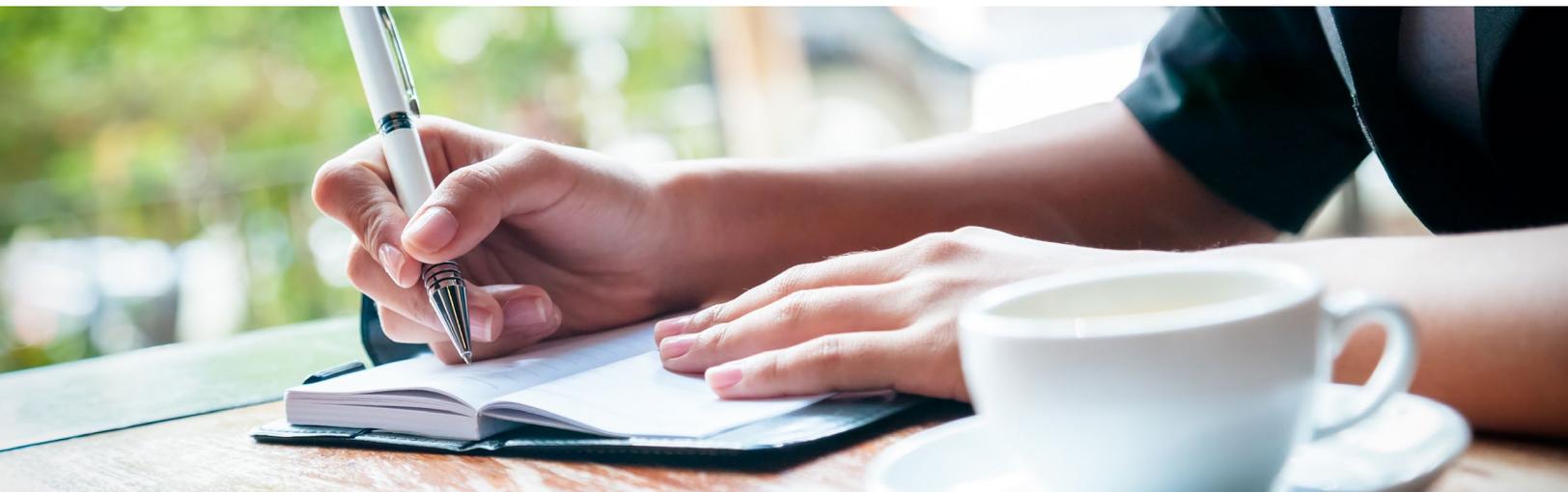
As you become aware of your physical habits with your phone, take moments to breathe deeply. This is also a great time to take a 5-minute tech break to meditate. The simple act of closing your eyes, feeling your feet and following your breath, resets any tension in your body, and thus your nervous system.

THANKFUL THURSDAY is when you take out a journal or open to a fresh page in your notebook and hand write 10 things you’re grateful for. Gratitude reduces stress and is proven to make us happier.

When you stop to consider what you are grateful for, you bring yourself into the present moment ,which is said to increase happiness and joy. If you add a splash of gratitude for you day, in that moment, the neuropathways in your brain respond. It’s almost magical.

Oprah Winfrey began keeping a daily gratitude journal and encouraged many others to do the same thing. What if all social media influencers, celebrities whether musicians, gamers, media stars, or revered athletes began to share their gratitude?

If you express gratitude for another, the benefits are amplified. Then if you actually share this gratitude with the person you are grateful for, then their lives are equally enhanced. Many have said that writing a letter and reading it to the intended person was one of the most meaningful moments of their lives.





FACE TO FACE FRIDAY is when you're talking with a friend and you consider whether you use texting or face-to-face communication more. What would it be like to talk face-to-face a little more frequently, and text a little less often?

How many times have you been in a conversation with someone about your phone, about people and their phones, or commented that everyone is looking down at their phones? Many people casually say, "I'm so addicted to my phone," but leave it at that, but what does this really mean? Did you know that technology companies have hired the best neuroscientists and software engineers to make our devices as "sticky" as possible? Each year they become more adept and successful at keeping us hooked. They want our attention and data.

This may sound extreme, but research has proven it is true, and there are many people working to shift the technology companies, but that will take time. Instead, we can become wiser to what they are doing, and begin to take back the control, but it's hard to do alone. The first step is to put your phone down and talk to people face to face. In- person conversations, absent of a phone in sight, deepens the conversation, builds empathy and results in more satisfying and fulfilling time together.

After the week, think about how these shifts led to other changes during these days and whether you could adapt some of these practices into your daily routines.

ABOUT SUSAN REYNOLDS

Susan Reynolds has over 20 years of experience in digital wellbeing, youth leadership and mindfulness. In 2019 she co-founded LookUp.live to discover, empower, and mobilize youth leaders who are taking action to raise awareness, inspire, and design a healthier, more inclusive, and responsible digital world.

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