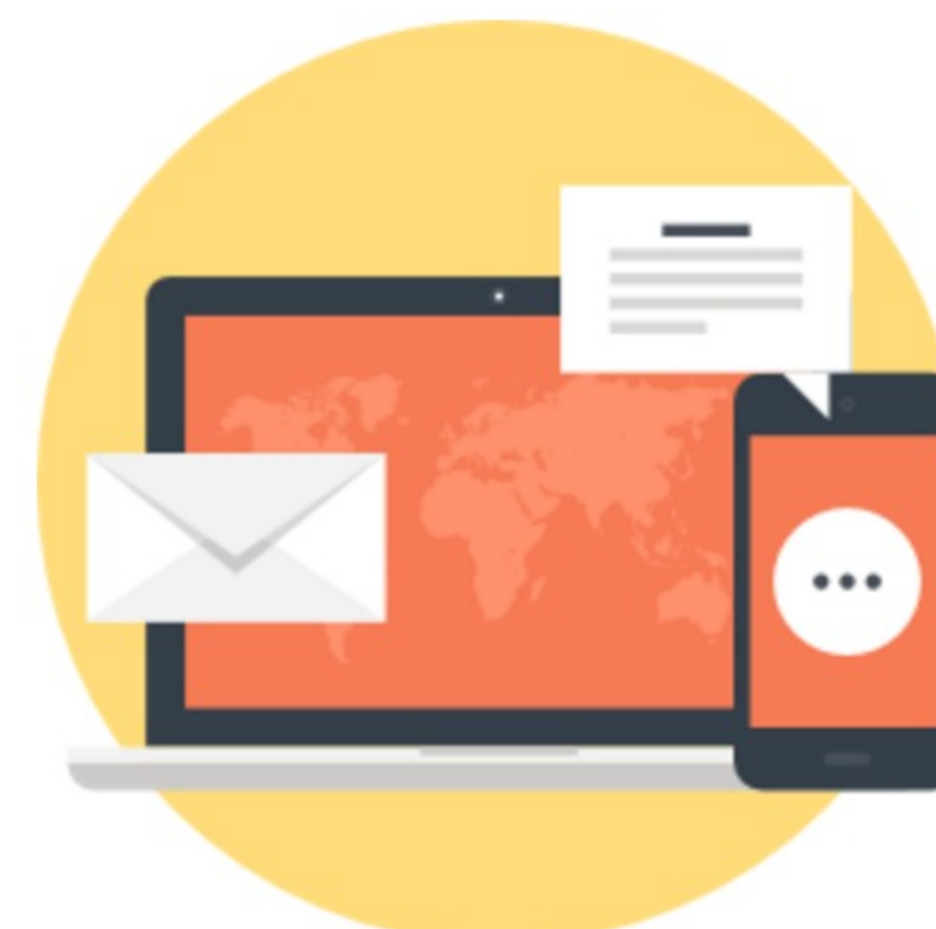




Strategies for SWITCHING OFF FROM TECH



Technology has become an integral part of modern life. Not only does it help streamline many of our work processes, but technology can enrich our personal lives in a number of ways. It is no surprise then that people are spending more and more of their time interacting with tech and looking at screens. However, research is revealing that extended periods of technology use has negative consequences for our health and wellbeing.



Risks of prolonged tech use

Studies have found that using technology stimulates the brain, which sounds good, but is also linked with increased difficulty relaxing and getting to sleep. Relationships have also been found between high technology use and obesity, as well as higher rates of social isolation, depression and anxiety.

Additionally, tech use is increasingly eating into our personal time. Over the course of an average work day, 19-20 hours per day are taken up by sleep, work and survival activities (e.g. eating, bathing, and looking after children). This leaves only 4-5 hours per day for personal time. However, over the past 10 years, we have almost filled all of our spare personal time with technology use. Our personal time is where we can do the things we love, with the people we love. This is the time when we can focus on ourselves and others, build skills and create meaning. This is the time we reflect back on later in our lives, and it is being taken up with technology.

What do we mean by Tech?

Smartphones are some of the most popular tech items out there and we use them to browse the web, access social media, work emails, apps, and games. Tech use also includes laptops, gaming consoles, and even watching TV.

Workplace Strategies

Organisations are increasingly recognising the value of helping their people to switch off from technology, implementing some great strategies to encourage staff to 'log-off'.

A Dutch company rigged their screens to the ceiling, and at 6pm every day (no matter what!) the screens would be automatically retracted up to the ceiling.

When employees at a German car manufacturer go on holiday their email system automatically deletes any emails they receive and asks the sender to re-send the email in a couple of weeks, or email it to someone else.



On the chart below, **red** is the increasing amount of screen time, and it is eating into our personal time.



Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/> and Moment App
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Strategies to Switch Off

Switching off from work-related tech is a great place to start, but we can also work on reducing the amount of tech we use in our personal time. Setting a few simple rules around when and how you use tech can help.



It's not realistic to remove tech completely from our lives, and tech can often make our lives easier. However, setting time limits for tech use can help make it more effective and can stop us losing hours to the never-ending Facebook feed. Try starting with 2 hours, and challenge yourself to reduce this over time to 30 minutes.



Identify key occasions throughout the day where you want to limit your screen time. Often focusing on an event is easier than a set time, as it allows for changing plans. One tech-free occasion might be dinner, where you want to instead focus on catching up with family or friends, or reflecting on the day. During these times, turn off the TV and put your phone as far away as possible so that you are not tempted. If this works for you, you might work up to tech-free days!



Using tech can become a habit, making it easy to forget what else is out there. Creating other options, such as signing up for a sport, stocking up on books or developing a new hobby can help remind us to step away from our tech. Getting other people involved in these hobbies can also help keep us accountable.



When TVs, gaming stations and even phones become commonplace in the bedroom, we can find ourselves staying in bed longer but sleeping less. Wherever possible, keeping tech and sleep separate can help us better recharge, and can also help get us get out of bed in the morning! This can be especially useful for kids and teenagers.



Smartphones are very portable, which is great, but it can also be our downfall. Keeping our phone on us at home can make it almost too easy to stay switched on. Creating a set place for your phone, or better yet, keeping it in a drawer, can stop us mindlessly scrolling. Be sure to turn the volume down so you are not constantly drawn in by the sound of alerts and notifications.

Technology, especially smartphones, are highly addictive, so reducing your screen time at first can be a real challenge. Reminding yourself that you don't have to be accessible to everybody all the time certainly helps. But don't forget that you are human, and you have days where your tech time stacks up. However, the more we practise these strategies, the easier they will become and eventually we will be able to create great healthy habits when it comes to our tech use.



Want to know more?

Assure Programs can offer you confidential support on how to improve your switching off skills. Call us today on 1800 808 374.