

THE JOURNAL FOR DIGITAL WELL-BEING

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“The unexamined life is not worth living”
- Socrates

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Introduction

There seems to be a problem surrounding digital media consumption. We often talk and hear about terms such as: information overload, the attention economy, and doom scrolling. Many of us know how harmful digital media can be but may not realize the full reach of its grasp especially when discussing our own digital media consumption habits.

Digital media refers to an almost infinite set of possible things and in this journal I refer to it vaguely as any information that is communicated through use of a computer. The main digital media I considered in creation of this journal are television, social media, phone applications, movies, podcasts, music, the internet, (but there are so much more)...

I put forth the idea that the “North American way of life” in 2024 for the average person is one of little reflection and understanding of one’s self. I put forth another idea that the technologies allowing for rapid communication and consumption of digital media paired with little reflection of one’s choices makes everyone extremely vulnerable to the intended outcomes of the designed media they consume. Without reflection, metacognition and careful consideration of digital media consumption we are **blind** walking down a path intentionally carved to harm us.

It is my hope that this journal helps you see.

It is my hope that this journal can help you realize facts about your digital media consumption.

It is my hope that this journal can free you to be who you wish to be.

I wish to help you, but can only do so if you help yourself. Therefore, I urge you to take up this journal with good intentions or do not take it up at all. Put in an effort to actually reflect and perform the activities otherwise the chances of it accomplishing its goal are small.

Let us begin...

1 - Reflections

This section is designed to guide you to reflect and think about your own digital media consumption. The goal of these reflections is to encourage and instill metacognitive thought habits surrounding the consumption of digital media.

Ideally this will lead to an understanding of why you choose to interact with and consume digital media as well as how it affects and changes you. I hope that these reflections help create thought habits that lead people to interact with digital media with greater intention and awareness.

The sections is separated into 3 parts: beginning reflection (designed as a first insight into one's digital media consumption habits), a pre and post reflection (designed to help people better interact with specific pieces of digital media), and finally periodic reflections (designed to recognize what has changed in your consumption and track progress, gained knowledge and goal setting).

1.1: Beginning Reflection

The beginning reflection is designed to be completed as a first exercise in reflection of one's digital media consumption. It asks basic questions that act as a guide to start the reflection process and attempt to get one to broadly understand the affects of digital media in their own lives.

1. What are the main types of digital media you consume?

2. How do you interact with each type? How often? When?

3. For each type of digital media explain **why** do you choose to interact with it?

4. From your memory how do you feel after you interact with each type of this digital media?

5. Describe your view of your relationship with digital media? Do you believe it significantly improves your life? What are the benefits and negative consequences?

6. What does healthy digital media consumption look like to you? Does your digital media consumption habits fall in this category?

7. If you were to completely stop consuming digital media how would your life be positively and negatively affected?

8. Do you often spend time researching the production of any particular media you consume? Specifically questions like: Who made this? Why? What are their intentions? Who benefits and who is negatively affected? Furthermore how important do you think these considerations are?

9. Do you ever follow up on the things you learn from your digital media consumption? Do you often repeat information that you have not double checked yourself?

10. What role (positive or negative) does digital media play in the goals you have for the future?

1.2: Pre and Post Reflections

This section includes many copies of the same 2 reflections: pre and post media consumption. The intention here is that you can use these reflections to better understand your digital media consumption habits and thought processes before and after consuming any digital media. The pre reflection is to be completed before you consume the intended media and then the post reflection is to be filled out afterwards.

Activity #3 challenges you to complete these reflections for the consumption of all digital media throughout an entire week. I would encourage you to complete this exercise and then use these reflections as you see fit afterwards.

NOTE TO TEACHER: For the sake of compactness, I only included 1 copy of the pre and post reflection but if this were to be printed, I would make around 30 copies of each in this section.

1.2.1: PRE DIGITAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION REFLECTION

1. Exactly what will you be consuming (be specific).

2. How long will this last?

3. Why are you consuming it?

4. What expected benefits do you expect to gain from it?

5. What potential negative consequences can result from it?

6. Who created this particular media? Who payed for its production? Why do you think they did this? What is their mission?

7. Who benefits from this and who is negatively affected by it?

8. Is this an impulsive move (had you planned to do this before the past 10 minutes)? If it is an impulsive move, wait 5 more minutes to see if you still feel the need to do it.

9. Is this a priority (is there something else you need to accomplish today that is more important)?

10. After this pre-reflection will you still consume the media? If yes, pay attention while you consume this media to see if the reason behind why you are consuming it (question 3) is satisfied.

1.2.2: POST DIGITAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION REFLECTION

1. Do you regret consuming this media? Do you think you could have spent this time in a better way?

2. What benefits did you get from it?

3. What negative consequences came out of it?

4. Did they match your prediction (question 3-5 of the pre reflection)?

5. Did you gain any factual knowledge? Can you trust this source?

6. Did you gain any new ideas from this? Will you dedicate more time to learning about it? When?

7. Would you re-consume this media? Would you suggest this to someone else? Who?

8. Do you consider this media to be ethical? Should this piece of media exist in the world? Should more content like it be produced? Would you consider paying the people that produced it or supporting them in another way?

1.3: Periodic Reflections

The following set of reflections are to be completed periodically. There is a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly reflection.

The purpose of these reflections is to understand how digital media consumption has affected the goals you have and things you want out of life.

NOTE TO TEACHER: For the sake of compactness, I only included 1 copy of each reflection in this section but if I were to print this journal there would be 365 daily reflections, 52 weekly ones, 12 monthly ones and one yearly reflection.

1.3.1: DAILY REFLECTION

1. How much time did you spend consuming digital media today?

2. How do you feel about the work you have done today? Were you productive?

3. Did digital media help you achieve anything today?

4. Did digital media act as an obstacle in any way today?

5. Set one goal for tomorrow and elaborate on the role digital media will play in your day?

1.3.2: WEEKLY REFLECTION

1. How much time did you spend consuming digital media this week?

2. Reflect on one time during the week where digital media put you in a negative mood.

3. Reflect on one positive thing digital media did for you this week.

4. Was the amount of digital media consumption this week healthy. Will you plan to increase or decrease usage next week?

5. Were you successful in the goals you set out to do this week and how did digital media affect them?

6. What are your goals or things you would like to accomplish next week and what role will digital media play?

1.3.3: MONTHLY REFLECTION

1. How much time did you spend consuming digital media this month?

2. Overall do you feel that this was a net positive or negative?

3. What is one thing you would change about your digital media consumption habits moving forward?

4. How much time did you spend researching about the creation of any particular digital media this month? Do you feel that it is an appropriate amount of time or should it increase/decrease?

5. Did you accomplish what you wanted to do this month? How did digital media affect this outcome?

6. Set a goal for next month and plan how digital media's role in you succeeding.

7. How did your digital media consumption change over the course of this month? Is there anything you learned about yourself or your digital media consumption habits that you should remember for the future?

1.3.4: YEARLY REFLECTION

1. Are you proud of what you accomplished this year?

2. What role did digital media play in the above answer? Was digital media largely an obstacle or a tool?

3. What do you wish to change about your digital media consumption habits for the following year?

4. How will you ensure this change occurs?

5. What do you wish to keep the same and how will you ensure this?

6. What was your most negative interaction with digital media this year? Describe the interaction and how you felt.

7. What was the most positive interaction with digital media this year. Describe the interaction and how you felt.

8. How did digital media affect your relationship with other people this year? Did it enhance current relationships? Help create new ones? Worsen existing relationships? Act as an impediment to creating new ones?

9. How did digital media affect your thoughts and your beliefs.

10. Which of the activities were you successful in completing this year? Do you plan on doing more of them next year?

11. Choose two specific pieces of digital media (perhaps one that you think was beneficial to you and one that was not) that you consumed most often and analyze them in detail by answering the following questions.

Media 1:

- A. What was the digital media?

- B. How much time did you spend consuming it this year?

- C. Who created this media? How are they making money?

- D. Why did they create it? How are they benefiting from it?

- E. Who else is benefiting? Who is negatively affected by it?

- F. Overall was it a net positive or negative for you?

- G. What do you wish to change or keep the same for next year about your consumption of this specific digital media?

- H. How has this digital media influenced your thoughts and beliefs? Is this a good thing?

- I. How has this digital media changed the what you think about other people in any way?

Media 2:

- A. What was the digital media?

- B. How much time did you spend consuming it this year?

- C. Who created this media? How are they making money?

- D. Why did they create it? How are they benefiting from it?

E. Who else is benefiting? Who is negatively affected by it?

F. Overall was it a net positive or negative for you?

G. What do you wish to change or keep the same for next year about your consumption of this specific digital media?

H. How has this digital media influenced your thoughts and beliefs? Is this a good thing?

I. How has this digital media changed the what you think about other people in any way?

2 - Activities

The purpose of this section is to offer a list of activities/challenges that you can do to understand your digital media consumption habits and consequences more deeply. This section would be successful if the activities offer any insight previously unknown related to any new information regarding one's digital media consumption.

I encourage the people who are completing these activities to either commit to doing them or refrain from it altogether. I believe they are more likely to achieve their goals if they are truly attempted. Failure is ok and might even help you learn more but not giving it an honest effort will not lead to the intended outcomes.

2.1: Activity #1 - Morning and Night Digital Disconnect

Instruction

For one whole week, do not consume any digital media or use any electronic device for the first hour after your wake up as well as the last two hours before you sleep. After the week is over complete the reflection.

Intention

There is a lot of research that indicates looking at screens before bed makes for worse sleep. It is also of my opinion that what one does the first thing in the morning indicates what one finds most important. The goal here is to see if the specific times of consuming media matter. My intuition is that these are the two worst times of the day to be consuming media. This exercise alone can indicate to many people if using their devices or looking at media during the morning or night negatively impacts them.

Reflection

1. Were you successful in the challenge? What was the hardest part?

2. If you failed how badly and why? Will you try it again? Were you able to do it for 3 days straight.

3. What positive impact did you experience?

4. Did you sleep improve? Did you notice any increase in energy during the day?

5. How were your mornings affected? What was some key takeaways from this experience?

6. Did you miss out on any opportunities as a result? What were the negative impacts?

2.2: Activity #2 - Digital Detox for One Day

Instruction

For one whole day, do not consume any digital media or use any electronic device. Complete the reflection at the end of the day.

Intention

The goal of this activity is to understand what it is like to live without any digital media and device usage. Pay attention to your thoughts and how they might be different today as well as how your thoughts then dictate your actions. Also keep in mind the idea that you potentially may be a different person in comparison to the “you” who consumes digital media. See if you can notice any significant difference and what the implications of that might be.

Reflection

1. Were you successful in the challenge? What was the hardest part?

2. If you failed how badly and why? Will you try it again?

3. What positive impact did you experience?

4. What were the negative impacts?

5. How were your thoughts different today?

6. How did these thoughts affect your actions? Were they very different from normal?

7. Did you observe any evidence that the “you” who consumes digital media and the “you” that is disconnected from it are different?

8. If you felt you were different reflect on how easy it is to be changed by the things you interact with especially digital media.

9. How did you feel throughout the day? Was it very different from your normal emotions?

2.3: Activity #3 - Mindfulness in Digital Media Consumption

Instruction

For an entire week complete a mindfulness practice in digital media consumption. The task is to fill out the pre and post reflection in Section 1.2 each time you consume media. This is a difficult and potentially annoying challenge but it can lead to metacognitive thought habits for future digital media consumption. After the week is over complete the reflection.

Intention

The goal of this activity is to help instill the habit and thought patterns that question why you consume specific media at specific times in your day as well as the benefits you receive from them. If these thoughts always naturally arise before consumption there is a higher chance that the digital media in question will be more beneficial than harmful.

Reflection

1. Were you successful in the challenge? What was the hardest part?

2. If you failed how badly and why? Will you try it again?

3. What positive impact did you experience?

4. What were the negative impacts?

5. During this mindfulness activity after a pre reflection, did you ever decide not to consume a specific media? What was it and why?

6. Do you notice any patterns in the reasons why you consume specific media?

7. Did you ever consume a piece of media for a particular reason expecting a particular outcome and then after consuming it not achieve that outcome or realize that reason? What was the media and why did this occur?

8. After completing this exercise, pay attention to see if these pre reflection questions and thoughts still linger before you consume media. If you had found this did benefit you, will you continue this exercise?

2.4: Activity #4 - Planning for Digital Media Consumption

Instruction

This activity may be very difficult to complete and requires planning ahead of time. The task is to plan all digital media consumption for a certain period of time and not to consume any other digital media outside of what was planned. Since this activity can be very difficult or impossible because of one's responsibilities I leave it up to you to decide the length of time to plan for. I would suggest 1 day, 3 days or 1 week as a starting point. I also leave the following as optional: besides planning for which digital media you will consume also plan for what times you will consume it at (being as specific as possible).

Furthermore once completed, regardless of success, you should attempt it again after a short break (~1 week). The second attempt will very likely have a more realistic planning and will likely be more beneficial.

To give more detail about the planning, before beginning the activity you must plan and list all digital media you will interact with during that time period. You do not have to interact with the media you say but you cannot consume any other digital media besides what you have written down (do not make it overly long so that you have the freedom to interact with anything - be honest!). After the week is over complete the reflection.

Intention

Oftentimes people fall down a digital media rabbit hole that distracts them from their priorities for the day. The goal of this exercise is to help people understand if they face this problem or not. Perhaps they let their day's go by and are extremely vulnerable to digital media distractions. Perhaps some people actually need unpredictable digital media usage to complete their work. This activity would be successful if it helps you recognize whether you can or cannot accomplish your day's tasks without unpredictable digital media usage and what it would be like to not have this option. It will hopefully offer deep insight into your relationship with digital media.

Reflection

1. Were you successful in the challenge or did you consume digital media that was not pre planned? How difficult was this task?

2. If you failed how badly and why? Will you try it again?

3. What positive impact did you experience?

4. What were the negative impacts?

5. Do you require unpredictable digital media consumption for your work? How does this affect your ability to plan and accomplish what you set out to do?

6. Did you feel you were more focused and less distracted?

-
-
-
7. Was it difficult to keep yourself from consuming digital media you did not plan to consume?
How often did you have to consciously refrain yourself?

-
-
-
-
8. What else did this activity teach you about your relationship to digital media?
-
-
-
-

2.5: Activity #5 - Digital Media Pause

Instruction

For one whole week, take a pause at any time during the day where you consume no digital media and also interact with the world by going outdoors in nature. It could be a short walk around your neighbourhood or a hike in a mountain but make sure time is spent every day to do this *digital media pause*. Complete reflection 1: daily pause after each break, and at the end of the week complete reflection 2: weekly summary.

Intention

The intention of this activity is to gain insight into what you are like without any digital media even just for a short while. Are the thoughts you have or feelings you feel significantly different and does this pause help you during the rest of your day?

Reflection 1: Daily Pause

1. How long did you spend outside? Were you able to pause from digital media consumption for the whole time you spent outdoors?

2. Where did you walk? What did you do? Who did you see?

3. What did you notice about your thoughts?

4. What did you notice about how you felt?

Reflection 2: Weekly Summary

1. Were you successful in the challenge? How difficult was it?

2. If you failed how badly and why? Will you try it again?

3. What positive impact did you experience?

4. What were the negative impacts?

5. What did you learn about yourself after this week?

6. How are your thoughts and emotions different during the time where you do not consume any digital media?

2.6: Activity #6 - Spread The Idea

Instruction

Organize an activity with your friends or family informing them that throughout the entirety of the activity no one is allowed to be on their phones or consume any digital media whatsoever. You could have picnic, a dinner or any other activity so long as everyone involved does not use their phone for the whole night or consume any digital media at all. Complete the reflection after the night is over.

Intention

The intention of this activity is to spread the idea behind this reflection and encourage you and your friends/family to understand your relationships more deeply. It would succeed if you notice anything about how digital media and your phone affect how you interact with people and even what you think about them.

Reflection

1. Describe what you did and who was there?

2. Were you successful in not using your phone or looking at any digital media for the whole night? If not why? Will you try this again?

3. Were the people you invited successful in this challenge?

4. How did the people you invited talk about or view this activity?

5. What did you learn about your relationships and how digital media affects them?

6. When talking with your group what differences did you all notice about the conversation or atmosphere.

7. Was this a beneficial experience for you and your group? Will you continue to organize nights like this?

3 - Media Consumption Log

This section is dedicated to keeping track of some of the digital media you consume. It is simply a log with the intended purpose of centralizing and creating an easy way to view what you have viewed. The hope is that seeing this collected list can inform you of how much digital media you consume and allow you to compare with others to see how your thoughts and ideas can be influenced by what you have consumed.

It is hard to record the consumption of short forms of digital media like reading news articles, social media “sessions” and the numerous advertisements people are subjected to daily but attempt to do this as best you can.

