

PERSONAL HAPPINESS EXPERIMENT

VEV 731 END TERM PROJECT (TRACK B)

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Sleep is essential for controlling attention, productivity, cognitive function, and emotional health. However, late-night "doom-scrolling" on phones, mindlessly ingesting infinite stuff on social media or the internet, is one of the most prevalent obstacles to students' ability to get a good night's sleep these days. This conduct postpones the onset of sleep, lowers the quality of sleep, and causes weariness and agitation the following day.

The habit chosen for this 10-day experiment is therefore using a **physical alarm clock** and placing the phone at least 2 meters away from the bed before sleeping. This method was suggested in our last VEV lecture, and we decided to choose it since we both personally feel that we need to improve our sleeping schedule and reduce screen time. We also placed a **motivating sticky note** on the phone with a message like '**You'll sleep better, don't pick me up!**' to create a behavioral cue. The rationale is that digital devices, especially phones, emit blue light and cognitive stimulation that delay sleep onset and contribute to poor sleep and increased anxiety. By deliberately removing the phone from arm's reach, the goal is to reduce nighttime screen exposure, minimize the temptation to scroll, and allow the mind to wind down naturally. Using a separate alarm clock ensures that waking up does not depend on the phone, preventing the "scrolling trap" first thing in the morning as well. Environmental modifications such as placing a distracting object farther away are known to significantly increase self-control and help build habits consistently.

We both will start this experiment on 07/11/2025 and will track our daily observations or changes in sleeping patterns and mood. Because we have different lifestyles and self-discipline levels, the experiment also allows us to explore **how the same intervention affects individuals differently**. Ultimately, the aim is to understand how a small but meaningful behavioral change can positively influence happiness and daily functioning.

To strengthen clarity and measurement, we also defined simple daily tracking variables:

- Sleep quality (1–5)
- Morning alertness (1–5)
- Mood stability (1–5)
- Sleep onset time (self-reported)

DAILY LOGS

VIDHI's DAILY LOG

DAY 1: Struggled to put the phone away because of the habit of checking social media before sleeping. It took almost 30 minutes to settle. I slept slightly earlier than usual but woke up feeling only moderately rested.

DAY 2: Placed the phone across the room again. Felt the urge to stand up and check notifications but resisted. Sleep onset time decreased. Woke up on time with the alarm, no snooze. The mood in the morning was neutral but stable.

DAY 3: Started feeling a sense of discipline forming. No doom scrolling. Fell asleep faster. I woke up 5 minutes before the alarm because I slept deeper. I felt positive and more energetic in the morning class.

DAY 4: Noticed avoiding screens before sleep reduced mental overstimulation. Slept peacefully. The morning mood improved and felt fresh and less irritated compared to usual. Productivity has increased.

DAY 5: Experienced a small setback: stayed up thinking about pending tasks but still did not use the phone. Sleep quality remained good. Woke up smoothly with the alarm.

DAY 6: Habit becoming easier. No temptation to check the phone. Instead, read a few pages of a book before going to sleep. I woke up without grogginess and attended class on time.

DAY 7: Sleep cycle stabilizing. I felt more energetic during the day. Friends noticed reduced tiredness. Motivation has increased.

DAY 8: Felt proud of consistency. Sleep felt deeper. The morning routine got smoother, did stretching and drank water. Mental clarity improved significantly.

DAY 9: Thoughts before bed were calmer; even felt sleepy naturally at the same time. I woke up 10 minutes before the alarm. I had a good breakfast, and my mood was cheerful.

DAY 10: Completion of 10 days felt rewarding. Phone at distance habits feel natural now. Enjoyed better sleep quality, stable mood, and consistent class attendance. I plan to continue it longer.

ANUP's DAILY LOG

Day 1: I forgot to put the phone away at first, but I remembered after I lay down. I brought my phone to the desk but still looked at it once. I did not sleep well and woke up feeling tired and groggy.

DAY 2: I remembered to put my phone away, but I kept thinking about the messages. Sleep was not very deep. Even though the alarm went off across the room, I woke up late.

DAY 3: A little better and no checking the phone in bed. I still had trouble going to sleep early. I woke up on time but didn't have much energy.

DAY 4: Began to change. Putting the phone far away helped with anxiety and FOMO. Sleep was a little better. I woke up just five minutes late.

DAY 5: The habit is getting better today. No desire to check notifications. I got more sleep by going to bed earlier. The morning mood got better, and I felt calmer.

DAY 6: Big improvement as I fell asleep faster and woke up feeling less tired. Less screen time has made me feel less stressed.

DAY 7: I felt a lot better. It was easier to pay attention to morning classes. There is no urge to check my phone at night. The alarm woke me up.

Day 8: Said they were sleeping more deeply and having more vivid dreams. Less stress when talking on the phone. Energy levels in the morning are much higher.

DAY 9: The routine at night got easier. I went to bed earlier without being told to. For the first time, I woke up without feeling groggy.

DAY 10: Finished the 10-day habit. Noticed a big difference in how stable my mood was, how well I could concentrate, and how awake I was in the morning. I will continue this habit for a longer time.

REFLECTION ON CHANGES, CHALLENGES AND INSIGHTS

VIDHI's REFLECTION:

Over these 10 days, I observed clear improvements in sleep and daily functioning. I adjusted to the habit surprisingly quickly. Keeping the phone at a distance helped me fall asleep faster because I was no longer trapped in habitual scrolling. By the second half of the experiment, **my sleep became deeper, my mornings became more alert, and my productivity increased.**

My main challenge initially was resisting the automatic urge to check notifications. Without doom scrolling, my mind wandered more at night, but this improved as I got used to sleeping without digital stimulation.

A major insight was that **environmental cues strongly shape behavior. Simply changing phone placement significantly reduced temptation.** I also experienced emotional benefits like less irritability, better focus, and better preparedness for the day. The changes were gradual but cumulative, showing that small habits compound over time.

This experiment demonstrated how consistent behavioral adjustments can positively influence well-being.

I definitely want to continue this habit in the long term because it has made my days more productive.

ANUP's REFLECTION:

My progress was slower than Vidhi's. In the beginning, I struggled with consistency, sometimes forgetting to move the phone or checking it after lying down. Because of this, the first few days did not show much improvement.

The biggest challenge was **mental dependence on notifications.** Even after putting the phone away, I constantly thought about messages or updates. Additionally, without scrolling, my mind wandered more at night, making it difficult to sleep.

Things changed around Day 6, when I became stricter about following the routine. After that, **sleep quality improved, anxiety reduced, and morning mood stabilized.** I started waking up on time and developed a healthier morning routine with a regular breakfast.

A key insight was realizing how much digital habits influence emotional well-being. Once I reduced late-night screen exposure, **I felt calmer, more focused, and more prepared for the day.**

By the end, I saw significant positive changes and truly felt the value of this habit. I aim to continue it.

CONCLUSION

This 10-day experiment demonstrated that a small environmental and behavioral modification like placing the phone away before sleeping can meaningfully improve sleep quality, emotional stability, morning alertness, and daily functioning.

Both participants experienced improvements, though at different rates due to individual differences in discipline and digital dependence. The results highlight the power of habit formation, environmental design, and mindful digital usage in enhancing personal well-being.