

5 Day Digital Detox Course

Welcome! You made a great decision to download this course.

This is not a “big detox course” or anything like that, but it is an easy-to-read guide where you will find a way to do a sustainable digital detox that doesn’t affect your career or social life. I have included daily action steps that will help you prioritize the most important things.

If you go through the challenge, you will:

1. Feel more clear-headed
2. Get more energy
3. Experience better focus

The value of stillness in today’s world is underrated. It is simply astonishing how helpful it can be to unplug from the constant distractions we encounter online.

The big tech platforms have both a tool component to them and a drug component. To overcome the drug component that makes us addicted and waste a lot of time, we need conscious strategies.

Why dopamine matters

The benefits of being conscious of our digital use are immense. If we limit our exposure, we will avoid the constant dopamine hits we get from scrolling and overstimulation in general. Adding a few more tweaks will help us optimize our dopamine levels.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that motivates us to do stuff and gives us pleasure when reaching rewards such as sex, food, and money.

By optimizing your dopamine levels, you will experience:

- Excitement
- Increased motivation
- Confidence and drive
- Becoming more goal-oriented

Everything will feel much more exciting, and you will have much more energy to get things done. Sounds pretty awesome, right?

So, let’s jump into it.

Preparation

Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous (ITAA) has developed some great tools. You don't have to be addicted to use and benefit from their models. ITAA has a framework to classify different online behavior.

Determining what kinds of digital activities you need to be careful with, what are beneficial uses, and what is not an issue for you is very useful. We will use their framework in the 5-Day Digital Detox Course.

The system is divided into **bottom, middle and top lines**.



1. **Bottom lines:** Digital activities we should abstain from at all costs. These are our digital compulsions or addictions. When we engage in these activities we cannot stop and get lost in them. We lose self-esteem every time we spend time on our bottom lines.



2. **Middle lines:** These are the digital activities that can trigger us. It is very important to be aware of what can trigger us to access our bottom lines. Personally, I used to struggle with porn addiction and for me watching porn is a bottom line. Anything that can trigger that unwanted behavior such as scrolling through Instagram or watching certain movies for example, are things I need to be careful with. Middle lines are digital activities that can lead us down the slippery slope to our bottom lines by triggering us by showing pictures, videos or evoking emotional states that make us vulnerable.



3. **Top lines:** These are healthy activities offline or with screens that empower us and improve how we feel about ourselves. These kinds of activities keep us satisfied, happy and are beneficial to our lives. Top lines can be beneficial uses of technology such as researching things, watching video lectures, recording music and so on. And our top lines encompass healthy hobbies and activities we engage with outside tech that makes our lives better.

Here are some easy to practice top lines that I have outlined for the purpose of the digital detox:

- 10-minute daily meditation
- Physical exercise
- Go for a walk for at least half an hour
- Write/journaling for 20 minutes
- Stretching for 15 minutes
- Read for half an hour

Our bottom, middle and top lines are different for everyone. We have different apps and digital activities we get lost in online and different interests and triggers. So, figuring out your bottom, middle, and top lines is a very useful exercise to get some clarity.

By consciously thinking about what can trigger you, you are in a much better position to manage your digital use. That will help you become more aware and disciplined in your life.

Tasks before the challenge starts:

Before we dive into the challenge, you need to prepare a bit.

1. Write down your last week's screentime

Take out a notebook and pen.

I recommend you write things down using a pen and paper instead of your computer or smartphone.

When you use the brain-hand connection, it has a bigger impact on your brain. In addition, you avoid using the computer or phone, which can trigger you to waste time online.

Any notebook will do, but if you can make it stylish, all the better.

The very first thing you should note down is how much time you spent online in the last week. You can find this out by going to your smartphone's settings and checking your screen time.

Write this number down.

Then, try to think through how much time you spent on your computer or tablet as well.

Add the two numbers together.

That should give you the total of time online outside work.

This number is probably higher than what you want it to be. But it is useful to see it for what it is. It is only when we see our situation from a place of objectivity that we are willing to change.

2. Define your bottom, middle and top lines

Spend some minutes thinking about your bottom, middle, and top lines. Remember, these are your personal ones, and they are different for everyone. Write them down in your notebook.

3. Turn off notifications

Turn off notifications on everything that is not really necessary. All apps that give you non-urgent notifications should be turned off.

4. Tell your friends that you will be a bit less available during the challenge

This will set expectations and ensure people will not worry if you spend a bit more time than usual before answering them.

5. Think through your long-term replacement activities

This one is especially important. What do you want to spend more time on going forward?

You may have a passion for playing the guitar and want to take your skill to the next level. Or perhaps you want to start a business but feel like you don't have the time. Whatever it is, try to reflect on what you want to do and what activities you can find more time for when you reduce your passive scrolling.

Preferably try to find something meaningful long-term to replace the time with, but anything off-screen will do in the beginning. If you reduce your passive screen time by 10 hours a week, you need something to fill the time with.

For the purposes of this five day-challenge, the top line suggestions I have pointed out will do, but for the long-term, you need to figure out what actually compels you and do that instead.

When you have finished the preparations, we are ready to begin.

5 Day Digital Detox Challenge

Day 1:

- Abstain from all bottom lines.
- Don't use any technology the last two hours before you go to sleep and the first hour after waking up.
- Pick two of the top line suggestions for today.

Day 2:

- Abstain from all bottom lines.
- Take a break of at least two hours from technology during your day.
- Don't use any technology the last two hours before you go to sleep and the first hour after waking up.
- Pick two of the top line suggestions for today.

Day 3:

- Abstain from all bottom lines.
- Take a break of at least two hours from technology during your day.
- Don't use any technology the last two hours before you go to sleep and the first hour after waking up.
- Pick two of the top line suggestions for today.

Day 4:

- Abstain from all bottom lines.
- Take a break of at least two hours from technology during your day.
- Don't use any technology the last two hours before you go to sleep and the first hour after waking up.
- Pick two of the top line suggestions for today.

Day 5:

- Abstain from all bottom and middle lines.
- Take a break of at least three hours from technology during your day.
- Don't use any technology the last two hours before you go to sleep and the first hour after waking up.
- Pick two of the top line suggestions for today.

Write down what went well and something to improve at the end of every day.

Congratulate yourself on what you managed to do. And write down what didn't go so well.

There is no point in beating yourself up if you didn't manage to do everything. Simply reflect on why something didn't go as planned and write down a potential solution. Remember, the point is not to try to be perfect. The point is to make progress and gradually live more independently of the pull from screens.

Plan and commit to doing this exercise! Find a suitable time slot and do it.

Abstaining from all bottom lines means you will not spend any time on apps or digital activities you get lost in. This is the most important part of the exercise.

Not using devices before going to sleep and after waking up will allow you to adjust to a more natural rhythm in your life and ensure good sleep. In addition, it is rare we really have to do something online during these times.

Having a break of a few hours every day from digital use allows us to get more present in our lives. And the top lines shift our focus from what we could do online to get some entertainment to how your immediate environment can give you stimuli.

You can do this during your workweek, or if you have time off, it doesn't matter. This exercise, done properly, should not limit your social life or affect work except for day five, where you stay away from all middle and bottom lines.

The point of the exercise is to become less dependent on digital entertainment and start doing more things out in the real world or engage more with useful ways to spend time with digital devices that give us real, tangible benefits in life.

Good luck!

Other suggestions:

Below I have listed several suggestions and techniques you can try later that will help you manage your digital use as well.

1. Find alternative ways to spend your time (top lines). The best way to avoid spending too much time online mindlessly is to find hobbies and goals that pull you away from screens.
2. Be disciplined with how you consume content and avoid passive use. Use your phone, computer, or tablet only when it is an activity that aids your life offline.
3. Buy an alarm clock. Having an alarm clock will make it much easier to avoid wasting time online before going to bed and when waking up.
4. Never bring your devices into your bedroom and especially your bed.
5. Don't use your phone during moments of boredom, for instance, waiting in line, in rideshare, etc. We need to get used to moments and situations during the day with little stimuli – time that is akin to meditation. Get used to becoming stimulated by the environment and the people around you, not the phone.
6. Don't layer stimuli too often. Many people put layers of stimuli on top of each other in many situations. For instance, when going to the gym, some people listen to music, drink or ingest caffeine pills first, scroll on their phone between sets, etc. That is a lot of different activities that spike their dopamine at the same time. We need to get used to the subtler and slower pace of real life and get pleasure from it.
7. Accountability: find other people doing this (ITAA).
8. Buy an old phone for calling and texting only. Some people have an old-school phone in addition to a smartphone. It can be useful only to bring the old phone if you want to be available for urgent matters but avoid getting distracted.
9. Access certain websites or platforms only from your computer. You can make a rule to yourself of only accessing certain websites or platforms from your computer. That will increase the barrier to entry and help you avoid getting lost in them as easily.

Things to keep in mind for the long-term

Everything ties together. It is not like we have separate siloes in our lives. If you are fed up with your job or have a poor lifestyle outside your digital habits, it will be more challenging to consciously control the time you spend online.

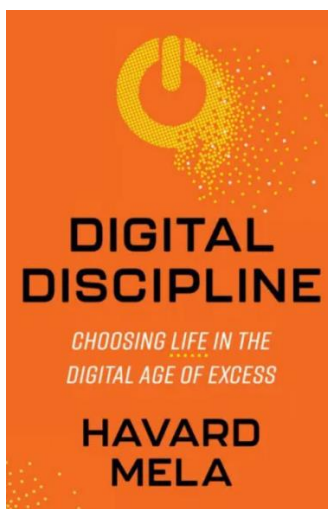
Make sure that you have:

- · A healthy diet
- · Good sleeping patterns
- · Good lifestyle habits

If you have poor lifestyle habits and party like crazy, keeping it together with your digital use will be difficult. You need to be taking good care of yourself. If you do that, the pull from the screens will be less intense, and it will be easier and less demanding to live an extraordinary life away from excessive screen time!

Build a great life centered around offscreen activities. Get out into your body and start feeling again! Focus on your top lines and activities that give you energy and are useful to you! Life is beautiful on the other side! When you manage to be conscious and disciplined with your digital use, there is no limit to how much you can get done, and you will feel on top of the world!

Other resources



- Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous (ITAA). Check out their website [here](#).
- Check out my website havardmela.com.
- Get my book *Digital Discipline* [here](#).