

# Digital Wellness Therapy Guide

## Evidence-Based Therapeutic Approaches for Digital Wellness

This guide integrates multiple therapeutic modalities to address digital dependency:

1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
2. Mindfulness-Based Interventions
3. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
4. Motivational Interviewing
5. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills

Each approach offers unique tools for managing technology use and improving well-being.

### CBT: Thought Records for Device Use

Track and challenge thoughts that drive excessive device use:

Situation: Describe when/where urge occurs

Automatic Thought: What went through your mind?

Emotion: What did you feel? (rate 0-100)

Behavior: What did you do?

Alternative Thought: More balanced perspective

Outcome: How do you feel now? (rate 0-100)

Example:

Situation: Home alone on Friday evening

Automatic Thought: "I have nothing better to do than scroll"

Emotion: Boredom (70), Loneliness (60)

Behavior: Scrolled social media for 3 hours

Alternative Thought: "I could call a friend, read, or work on my art project"

Outcome: Boredom (50), Loneliness (40), Regret (70)

Over time, this practice:

- Increases awareness of patterns
- Challenges automatic thoughts
- Builds healthier response options
- Reduces impulsive device use

### Mindfulness: RAIN Technique

RAIN is a four-step mindfulness practice for working with difficult urges:

R - Recognize:

Notice when you feel the urge to use your device. Simply acknowledge: "I'm feeling the urge to check my phone."

A - Allow:

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Let the feeling be present without trying to change it. The urge doesn't require action. It's just a sensation.

I - Investigate:

With curiosity, explore the urge:

- Where do you feel it in your body?
- What emotion is underneath?
- What need is present?
- What's the quality of the sensation?

N - Nurture:

Offer yourself compassion. Place a hand on your heart and say: "This is hard. I'm doing my best. May I be kind to myself."

After RAIN, you can choose how to respond. Often, the urge has passed or decreased significantly.

## ACT: Values-Based Goal Setting

Align technology use with your deepest values:

Step 1: Identify Core Values

In each life area, what matters most to you?

Relationships:

- Being present with loved ones
- Building deep connections
- Being a good listener
- Showing up consistently

Personal Growth:

- Learning new skills
- Pursuing creative interests
- Physical health
- Emotional well-being

Contribution:

- Helping others
- Making a difference
- Being part of community
- Using talents meaningfully

Step 2: Rate Current Alignment

For each value, rate 1-10: How well do current technology habits support this value?

Step 3: Set Valued Goals

Choose one value. Create a SMART goal:

- Specific: Exactly what will you do?
- Measurable: How will you track it?
- Achievable: Is it realistic?

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- Relevant: Does it align with the value?
- Time-bound: When will you do this?

Example:

Value: Being present with family

Current Rating: 4/10

Goal: Have device-free dinners Monday-Friday for the next month

Step 4: Identify Barriers

What obstacles might arise? Plan strategies for each.

Step 5: Track and Adjust

Review progress weekly. Celebrate successes. Adjust as needed.

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## Motivational Interviewing: Change Talk

Strengthen your own motivation by articulating reasons for change:

DARN-CAT Framework:

Desire:

- "I want to feel more present"
- "I want better sleep"
- "I want deeper relationships"

Ability:

- "I was able to leave my phone home for a hike"
- "I can focus without my phone for 30 minutes"
- "I know how to turn off notifications"

Reasons:

- "I sleep better without screens before bed"
- "My relationships improve when I'm not distracted"
- "I accomplish more without constant interruptions"

Need:

- "I need to be more present for my kids"
- "I need to protect my mental health"
- "I need to reclaim my time"

Commitment:

- "I will put my phone in another room at night"
- "I'm committed to device-free meals"

Activation:

- "I'm ready to make changes"
- "I'm willing to try new strategies"

Taking Steps:

- "I've already turned off social media notifications"
- "I deleted Instagram from my phone yesterday"

Practice saying these statements aloud. Hearing yourself express motivation strengthens commitment.

## DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

Manage urges without giving in using DBT TIPP skills:

T - Temperature:

Change your body temperature to shift emotional state:

- Splash cold water on your face

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- Hold ice cubes
- Take a cold shower

This triggers the dive reflex, calming your nervous system.

I - Intense Exercise:

Do brief, intense physical activity:

- 50 jumping jacks
- Sprint up stairs
- Push-ups or squats
- Dance energetically

Burns off adrenaline and shifts focus.

P - Paced Breathing:

Slow your breathing to calm anxiety:

- Breathe in for 4 counts
- Hold for 4 counts
- Breathe out for 6 counts
- Repeat for 5 minutes

P - Paired Muscle Relaxation:

Combine breathing with muscle relaxation:

- Tense muscles while breathing in
- Release while breathing out
- Move through body: feet to head

When urges feel overwhelming, use TIPP skills to get through the moment without acting impulsively.

## Building Sustainable Habits

Transform insights into lasting change:

Start Small:

- Choose one behavior to change
- Make it ridiculously easy
- Build confidence through success
- Gradually increase difficulty

Habit Stacking:

Link new habits to existing ones:

"After I [existing habit], I will [new habit]"

Examples:

- "After I brush my teeth, I'll put my phone on the charger in another room"
- "After I eat dinner, I'll go for a 10-minute walk without my phone"
- "After I wake up, I'll meditate for 5 minutes before checking my phone"

Implementation Intentions:

Specify when, where, and how you'll act:

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"If [situation], then I will [behavior]"

Examples:

- "If I feel the urge to check social media, then I will take three deep breaths"
- "If I'm waiting in line, then I will notice my surroundings instead of checking my phone"
- "If I wake up during the night, then I will do a body scan instead of scrolling"

Environment Design:

- Make healthy choices easy
- Make unhealthy choices hard
- Use physical reminders
- Create accountability systems

Progress Tracking:

- Keep a daily log
- Celebrate small wins
- Learn from lapses
- Adjust strategies
- Share progress with others

## Self-Compassion in Behavior Change

Treat yourself with kindness during the change process:

Three Components of Self-Compassion:

1. Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment:

When you slip up, speak to yourself as you would a good friend:

Instead of: "I'm so weak, I can't even stay off my phone"

Try: "This is challenging. I'm learning and growing. Tomorrow is a new day."

2. Common Humanity vs. Isolation:

Remember that struggle is part of being human:

Instead of: "I'm the only one who can't control device use"

Try: "Millions of people struggle with this. I'm not alone. This is a widespread challenge."

3. Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification:

Observe your experience without getting swept away:

Instead of: "I'm a failure, I'll never change"

Try: "I'm noticing thoughts of failure. I'm experiencing difficulty. This is temporary."

Self-Compassion Break:

When struggling, place hand on heart and say:

1. "This is a moment of suffering" (mindfulness)

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2. "Suffering is part of life" (common humanity)
3. "May I be kind to myself" (self-kindness)

Research shows self-compassion is more effective than self-criticism for behavior change. Kindness motivates; criticism depletes.