

*Your Guide to a
Do-It-Yourself*

TECH-FREE HOME RETREAT

WELCOME



My name is Christina and I offer support for people who want to heal their relationship with technology and restore balance in their lives

I made this guide for people who would like to go on a Tech Free Retreat in their own home.

If you are interested in diving deeper into digital wellbeing and right-sizing your relationship with technology, I'd love to hear from you!



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NEED A BREAK FROM CONSTANT CONNECTIVITY?

Over the past decade, we have experienced unprecedented advances in technology. These innovations enrich our lives, but also create conditions of constant distraction and decrease our ability to enjoy in-person social connections and present moment experiences.

The time we spend on email, the internet, smartphones and social media strengthens our brains' networks for data processing, gives us access to unlimited information and provides surface-level connections to thousands of people.

However, neuroscientists have discovered that when we spend most of our time on screens and glued to our phones, we lose the capacity for contemplation, deep thinking, sustained concentration, and emotional connection.

This is because the neural pathways that perform these actions are physically depleted when we spend so much time in the digital world.

THE GOOD NEWS:

Because of our brains' amazing plasticity, it is never too late to strengthen our neural networks for deep thinking, concentration, creativity, and emotional connection.

We can do this by reducing the time we spend with digital information and increasing the time we spend working without distraction, tolerating boredom and connecting with people face-to-face in real time.

This guide offers a starting point for finding tech-life balance, reclaiming your humanity and making the shift from feeling controlled by technology to engaging with it on your own terms.

THE 10 STEPS IN THIS DIY DIGITAL RETREAT

1. Prepare
2. Meditate & Set an Intention
3. Engage Your Senses
4. Spend Time in Nature
5. Journal
6. Investigate Your Relationship with Social Media
7. Commit to In-Person Connections
8. Strategize to Reduce Your Screen Time
9. Reclaim Your Time
10. Close with a Meditation & Gratitude Practice

ARE YOU READY? LET'S GET STARTED!



1 PREPARE

COMMIT TO A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN YOU WILL BE UNPLUGGED.

- Block off the time on your calendar.
- Make an emergency contact plan (if it will help give you peace of mind)
- Decide where to store your digital devices during the retreat (phone, tablet, smart watch, laptop)
- Do you want to ask a friend to hold your devices so you won't be tempted to cheat?

SIT QUIETLY & MEDITATE ON YOUR INTENTIONS FOR THIS RETREAT.



2 MEDITATE & SET INTENTIONS



3 ENGAGE YOUR SENSES

MAKE A PLAN TO ENGAGE ALL OF THE SENSES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO YOU.

- Find something beautiful to look at.
- Eat something delicious.
- Feel the textures in your environment.
- Find scents inside and outside to experience.
- Listen to ambient sounds. Enjoy music

FIND A PARK OR SIT IN YOUR BACKYARD.

Research shows that spending time in nature can decrease overstimulation, reduce stress, and change negative mental states to positive ones.



4 SPEND TIME IN NATURE



5 JOURNAL

SPEND SOME TIME WRITING ABOUT WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU.

What have you been meaning to make time for, but never get around to?

6 INVESTIGATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL MEDIA



THINK ABOUT THE TYPES OF THINGS YOU POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

- What do I post? (photos, opinions, articles, experiences, stories, ideas?)
- How do I want to feel when I post? (connected, respected, accepted, validated, envied, seen, admired?)
- How can I get those emotional needs met in "real life?"
- What do I want people to think about me and why?
- How close is this to my experience of myself?
- Am I emotionally isolated? (If so, what can I do to break that isolation?)

WHO CAN YOU REACH OUT TO FOR IN-PERSON FACE TIME?

- This is hard during covid, but if you can do a distance hang, please do!
- Plan to reach out to at least 3 people to hang out.

Staying in touch through technology is convenient and necessary, but screen time does not meet our physiological need for human connection

7 COMMIT TO IN-PERSON CONNECTIONS



DECIDE WHAT STEPS YOU WILL TAKE TO REDUCE SCREEN TIME.

- See the attached worksheet.
- You don't have to do it all.
- Decide which steps you will focus on first!

8 STRATEGIZE



REVIEW YOUR PRIORITIES AND SET ASIDE TIME TO FOCUS ON THEM.

- Go back and read your journal writing.
- Choose which priorities and activities you would like to focus on.
- Set aside time on your schedule for them!

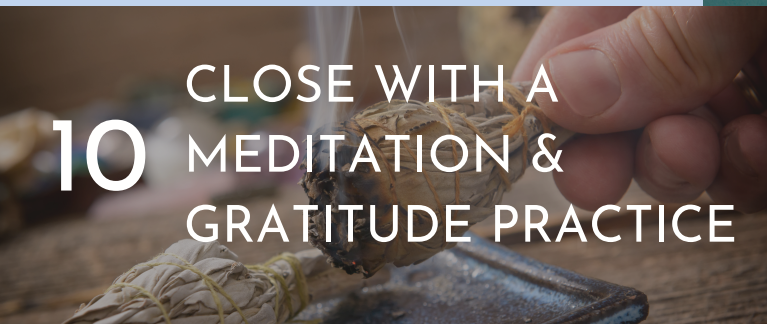
9 RECLAIM YOUR TIME



SIT QUIETLY AND REFLECT ON YOUR RETREAT EXPERIENCE.

Can you name 5 things you are grateful for today?

10 CLOSE WITH A MEDITATION & GRATITUDE PRACTICE



ON YOUR PHONE

- Turn off alerts and push notifications.
- Delete apps that are not useful or cause distraction.
- Use Airplane Mode to get breaks from your phone.
- Use apps to create stop cues and reduce distraction.
- Moment, Freedom, and Forest are some apps to consider.
- Change your phone settings to set your screen to grayscale. It will make the screen much less appealing.
- Limit your first page of apps to just tools—the apps you use for quick in-and-out tasks like Maps, Camera, Calendar, Notes, or Lyft. Move the rest of your apps, especially mindless choices, off the first page and into folders.
- If you can't stop scrolling on social media, delete those apps and limit use of them to desktop-only.
- Avoid looking at your phone when you are bored. Put it away and look at the world around you when you are standing in line, riding mass transit, eating a meal alone (and especially with others), in a waiting room.
- Before you load an app on your phone, ask yourself how "nutritious" it is. Will it just serve as a mindless distraction or will it serve as a useful tool to enrich your life? Does it perform a task that you could do manually or cognitively and want to retain capacity for performing without the help of technology?
- Write a message on a piece of paper that says something like "what do you want to pay attention to," "look up," or "why now, what for, what else could you be doing?." Take a photo and place it on your lock screen. Better yet, have a loved one hold the paper in the photo. (Thanks to Catherine Price / How to Break Up With Your Phone for this idea.)

ON YOUR COMPUTER

- Turn off alerts and push notifications.
- Keep your email program closed when doing tasks other than answering email.
- Schedule set times to answer email and let colleagues know your email boundaries. e.g., "I answer emails twice a day between 9 and 10am & 4 and 5pm."
- Don't open your email unless you have time to respond.
- Unsubscribe from email lists to reduce clutter. This takes time but is worth it!
- Keep your computer's home screen uncluttered. Close windows & apps you are not using.
- Use apps to create stop cues and reduce distraction. e.g., Stay Focused, Block Site, News Feed Eradicator for Facebook.

IN YOUR HOME

- Make your bedroom a tech-free zone.
- Use something other than your phone for an alarm clock.
- Set up your charging station outside of your bedroom.
- Leave your phone out of your physical reach as often as possible, preferably in another room. Research shows that people use their phone much less when they have to use their feet to reach it.

IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

- Don't look at a device first thing in the morning.
- Journal, workout, meditate, shower, eat breakfast first - screens second.
- Pick one night (or more) a week where you read a book rather than watching media.
- Set a time at the end of the day to stop looking at your phone/laptop and stop responding to texts & emails. Make this a ritual.
- Aim to avoid phones, computers and tablets two hours before bedtime and television 1 hour before bedtime.
- Set limits for checking social media sites. For example, once a day between 5 and 6pm
- Spend full days, weeks or even a month taking a break from social media to see how you fill your time without it.
- Start a meditation practice. Calm, Headspace and Insight Timer are great meditation apps.
- Read books and other linear documents without hypertext.
- Choose paper books, newspapers and magazines or put your e-reader on Airplane Mode. Reading with hypertext causes distraction and takes you out of the present moment.
- Research shows that you will retain more information reading linear text and avoiding the distraction of hypertext, ads, and multimedia that come with reading web-based articles.

IN YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

- Put your phone away when having social time with friends.
- Research shows that the mere presence of a smartphone—even with the screen turned down—diminishes the quality of conversation because it represents the possibility of interruption and discourages people from expressing themselves fully.
- Make an effort to connect with your partner and children every day with no screens in the room.
- Have experiences without documenting them on social media. Taking photos to post on social media takes you out of the moment: you start to think about what filter to use, how people will respond to your post, and what the photo says about your life.
- Make an effort to increase time spent in face to face community. Throw dinner parties, host game nights, and plan other screen-free social events.
- Reach out to friends you have not seen for a while to set a time to hang out.
- Avoid "phubbing." (snubbing people by looking at your phone rather than focusing on the individuals in front of you).
- If someone you care about posts an accomplishment or celebration on social media, send them a note or call them to congratulate them, rather than just hitting "like."
- Reclaim the art of letter writing and reaching out to people on snail mail. Keep a stack of pretty cards or post cards to send out to people letting you know you are thinking of them.
- Reclaim phone calls (or Skype, Facetime or another medium of simultaneous communication) with close friends and family. You may need to schedule these in advance.