

The value of unplugging

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(HealthDay)—It's no secret that we love our smartphones and other electronic devices for staying connected.

Perhaps too much.

According to one study on cellphone use by a mobile security company, 63 percent of women and 73 percent of men between the ages of 18 to 34 can't go even one hour without checking their phones.

And research published in the internet-based journal *First Monday* found that when [college students](#) took a break from [social media](#), some were unable to find substitutes for the place it filled in their lives. Many had the feeling they were missing out on something when they weren't connected.

But all this connectivity comes at a price. For starters, time spent on our devices may be time taken away from exercise. Like other sedentary behaviors, this can reduce your [fitness level](#).

Research done at Harvard suggests that being available 24/7 for texts and emails may actually make you less productive at work and less satisfied with your [personal life](#). Indeed, results from the latest American Psychological Association "Stress in America" survey found that 44 percent of people who check email, texts and social media either "often" or "constantly" said they feel disconnected from family, even when they're together.

And regularly using [electronic devices](#) (think cellphones, tablets, laptops) late at night has been linked to sleep disorders, stress and even [depression symptoms](#). And your risk grows if you're also a heavy cellphone user.

What's the answer?

Unplugging—taking regular breaks away from your devices and putting limits on how available you are. The need to unplug is so strong there's

even a National Day of Unplugging, from sundown to sundown starting on the first Friday in March.

But you don't have to wait until then. Try turning off your electronics an hour earlier at night and designate a few unplugged hours every weekend. It might be hard at first, but like any other habit, you'll grow into it over time.

According to the American Psychological Association, these nuggets of quiet will help you relax, reflect and even be more creative.

More information: For everyday ideas on how to break free of your electronic devices, check out the website of the [National Day of Unplugging](#).

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