

A digital detox does not improve wellbeing, say psychologists

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A 24-hour period of abstinence from your smartphone induces cravings, but mood and anxiety remain stable, say psychologists.

The study, led by Dr. Thom Wilcockson of Loughborough University, asked participants to place their phone in a secure sealed bag for 24 hours with a request not to open it.

In a small sample of smartphone users, psychologists measured three variables -mood, [anxiety](#), and craving- on four occasions, which included a 24-hour period of smartphone abstinence.

Only craving was affected following this brief period of abstinence, but

it had no impact on mood and anxiety.

Dr. Wilcockson, of the University's School of Sports, Exercise and Health Sciences, said: "The craving results indicate that, as expected, people enjoy using their smartphones and miss them when they are unavailable. However, our results indicate that it may be inappropriate to consider smartphones in the same framework as behavioral addictions as we found little evidence that they meet important behavioral addiction criteria."

Dr. David Ellis, a lecturer in Computational Social Science at Lancaster University, added: "The growing popularity of 'digital detoxes' has been encouraged by claims that removing oneself from technology can help reduce stress and improve well-being. However, our results suggest that a short-term digital detox from your [smartphone](#) is unlikely to provide any [health benefits](#)."

The study was published in *Addictive Behaviours*.

More information: T.D.W. Wilcockson et al. Digital detox: The effect of smartphone abstinence on mood, anxiety, and craving, *Addictive Behaviors* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.06.002)

Provided by Loughborough University

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