

Five ways to manage your doomscrolling habit

May 18 2022, by Christian Van Nieuwerburgh



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Doomscrolling, according to [Merriam-Webster](#), is "the tendency to continue to surf or scroll through bad news, even though that news is saddening, disheartening, or depressing." For many it's a habit born of the pandemic—and one that is likely to stay.

Some [health experts](#) recommend limiting access to [social media](#) to [reduce the negative effects of doomscrolling](#), and popular magazines [highlight the risks](#) of social media addiction. According to the BBC, the barrage of negative coverage of doomscrolling has led to some people [ditching their smartphones](#) altogether.

Although research showing the negative effects of doomscrolling is convincing and the [recommendations are clear](#), few of us seem to be following this well-intentioned advice. There are a few reasons for this.

First, blocking out [news](#) during times of crisis may not be such a good idea. Second, many of us [don't respond well](#) to being told what we can and cannot do.

Finally, being asked not to do something can make matters worse. It can push us into a negative frame of mind and make us [less likely to change our behavior](#).

Rather than quitting doomscrolling, what if we simply got better at managing it?

It is helpful to start by acknowledging that seeking news and information during times of crisis is perfectly normal. In fact, this response is hard-wired in us humans.

Staying alert to danger is part of our survival mechanism. Gathering information and being prepared to face threats have been key to our survival for millennia.

Right now, there are many threats facing us: a war in Europe that could escalate to [nuclear conflict](#), a pandemic that has already killed millions of people and predictions of a climate catastrophe, alongside many other [natural disasters](#) and human conflicts across the world.

In this context, it is not surprising that we want to be alert to danger. Wanting to learn more about what is happening and equipping ourselves with the latest information is perfectly reasonable.

Rather than avoiding the news altogether, let's make sure that we are getting what we need from our interactions with the news. Here are five suggestions to achieve this.

1. Choose how much time you're going to invest in consuming the news

Why not include all the ways you access the news? What amount of time each day seems reasonable to you? Once you have a [time window](#), try sticking to it.

2. Be aware of confirmation bias when choosing what to consume

Remember, you are the consumer and you can choose what to learn about. However, we need to be aware of a [tendency](#) that psychologists call "[confirmation bias](#)." This is when we favor information that supports our existing beliefs or viewpoints.

In other words, we sometimes seek news that confirms what we already believe. This may have been one reason you clicked on this article. So just be aware of this tendency and be aware of what you're not choosing to read.

3. Check the source

Any time you consume anything, it is helpful to know its source. Who has posted this information? Why are they sharing it with you? Are they

trying to convince you of something? Are they trying to manipulate you to think or behave in a particular way?

Knowing the answers to these questions will support you to stay in control of how you use the information that you have gathered.

4. Remember that things are not always black or white

We live in an increasingly polarized world. According to psychologists, "polarized thinking" is a [cognitive distortion](#) (thinking error) that can occur when we're under pressure. It is the tendency to see things as black or white, rather than recognizing that we live in a world with many colors and shades of gray.

Find ways to hold strong views while remaining curious about other opinions. Selecting and consuming articles that represent differing opinions may support this.

5. Be biased towards the positive

One reason that doomscrolling can be so detrimental is that many of us are drawn to negative information. Psychologists call this the "[negativity bias](#)." From an [evolutionary perspective](#), it has been important for us to prioritize negative stimuli (threats such as predators) over positive stimuli (enjoying the warmth of a summer's day).

To counterbalance this tendency, we can adopt a bias towards the positive as we consume news. In practical terms, this means seeking positive news stories to balance out our experience of staying updated.

Managed properly, keeping on top of the latest news can support you to

feel better informed and able to respond in case it becomes necessary. If we're going to doomscroll, let's do it right.

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