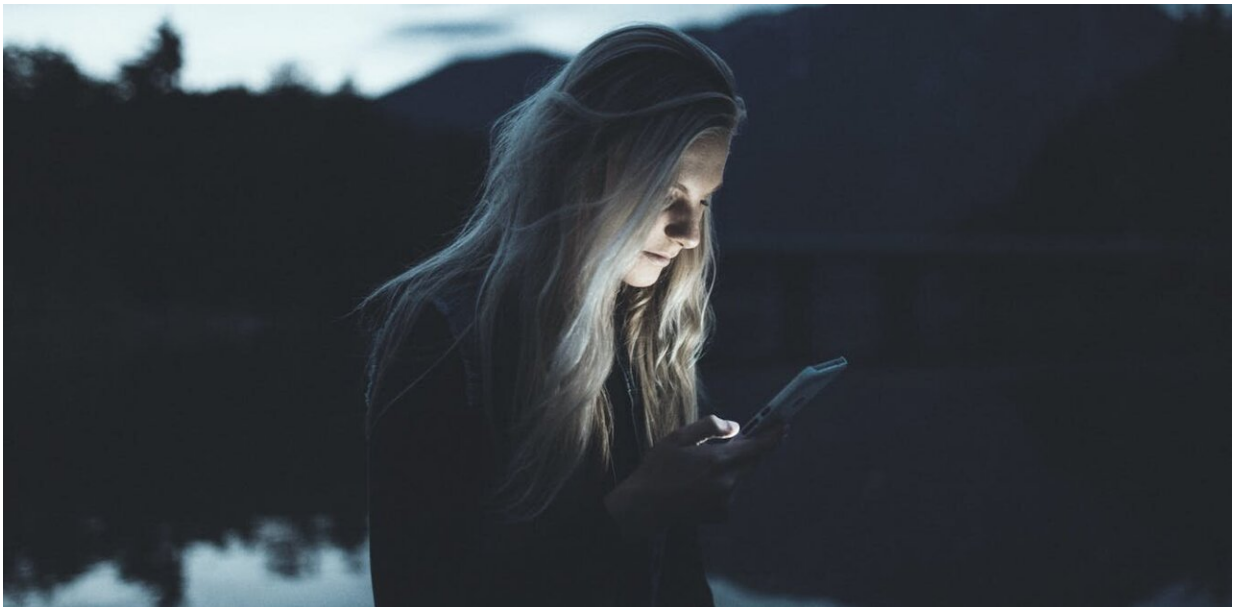


# Doomscrolling is literally bad for your health. Here are four tips to help you stop

September 9 2022, by Kate Mannell and James Meese

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Becca Tapert/Unsplash

Doomscrolling can be a normal reaction to living through uncertain times. It's natural to want to understand dramatic events unfolding around you and to seek out information [when you're afraid](#). But becoming absorbed in bad news for too long can be detrimental.

A [newly published study](#) has found that people with high levels of problematic news consumption are also more likely to have worse mental

and physical health. So what can you do about it?

We [spoke to](#) Australians in the state of Victoria about their lengthy lockdown experiences and found how they managed to stop doomscrolling. Here are some tips to help you do the same.

## **Doomscrolling—unhelpful and harmful**

"Doomscrolling" describes what happens when someone continues to consume [negative news](#) and information online, including on social media. There is [increasing evidence](#) that this kind of overconsumption of bad news may have [negative impacts](#).

Research suggests doomscrolling during crises is unhelpful and even harmful. During the early COVID-19 pandemic, consuming a lot of news [made people feel overwhelmed](#). [One study](#) found people who consumed more news about the pandemic were also more anxious about it.

Research into earlier crises, like [9/11](#) and the [Boston Marathon bombings](#), also found that sustained exposure to news about catastrophes is linked to negative mental health outcomes.

I understand why so many people are doomscrolling right now. Try to focus on the things you can do to help, reporting from the trusted news organizations, and also limiting your time on social media.

— Doomscrolling Reminder Bot (@doomscroll\_bot) [September 7, 2022](#)

## **Choosing to take control**

During the peak of COVID-19 spread, many found themselves doomscrolling. There was lots of [bad news](#) and, for many people, lots more spare time. Several studies, including our own, have found that limiting news exposure helped people to cope.

Melbourne, the state capital of Victoria, experienced some of the [longest-running lockdowns in the world](#). Wanting to know how Victorians were managing their news consumption during this time, we launched a survey and held interviews with people who limited news consumption for their own well-being.

[We found](#) that many people increased their news consumption when the lockdowns began. However, most of our participants gradually introduced strategies to curb their doomscrolling because they realized it was making them feel anxious or angry, and distracted from daily tasks.

Our research found these news-reduction strategies were highly beneficial. People reported feeling less stressed and found it easier to connect with others. Here are some of their strategies, which you might want to try.

## **1. Make a set time to check news**

Rather than checking news periodically across the day, set aside a specific time and consider what time of day is going to have the most positive impacts for you.

One participant would check the news while waiting for her morning cup of tea to brew, as this set a [time limit](#) on her scrolling. Other participants preferred saving their news engagement for later in the day so that they could start their morning being settled and focused.

## **2. Avoid having news 'pushed' to you**

Coming across news unexpectedly can lure you into a doomscrolling spiral. Several participants managed this by avoiding having news "pushed" to them, allowing them to engage on their own terms instead. Examples included unfollowing news-related accounts on social media or turning off push notifications for news and social media apps.

## **3. Add 'friction' to break the habit**

If you find yourself consuming news in a mindless or habitual way, making it slightly harder to access news can give you an opportunity to pause and think.

One participant moved all her social media and news apps into a folder which she hid on the last page of her smartphone home screen. She told us this strategy helped her significantly reduce doomscrolling. Other participants deleted browser bookmarks that provided shortcuts to [news sites](#), deleted news and [social media](#) apps from their phones, and stopped taking their phone into their bedroom at night.

## **4. Talk with others in your household**

If you're trying to manage your news consumption better, tell other people in your household so they can support you. Many of our participants found it hard to limit their consumption when other household members watched, listened to, or talked about a lot of news.

In the best cases, having a discussion helped people come to common agreements, even when one person found the news comforting and another found it upsetting. One couple in our study agreed that one of them would watch the midday news while the other went for a walk, but

they'd watch the evening news together.

## **Staying informed is still important**

Crucially, none of these practices involve avoiding news entirely. Staying informed is important, especially in crisis situations where you need to know how to keep safe. Our research shows there are ways of balancing the need to stay informed with the need to protect your well-being.

So if your news consumption has become problematic, or you're in a crisis situation where negative news can become overwhelming, these strategies can help you strike that balance. This is going to remain an important challenge as we continue to navigate an unstable world.

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