

Managing Digital Anxiety

Did you know?

We used to have only a handful of interactions a day due to only being able to connect with people that we met in person and later via the telephone or email.

With the surge in the use of social media, we may now have tens, hundreds or even thousands of interactions with people daily, seeing glimpses into their lives and perhaps comparing them with our own. Research has found both positive and negative effects of social media but the frequency of 'checking' our devices has been shown in various studies to have a detrimental effect on wellbeing*.

So what can we try?

1 Batch check

Every time we check our phone or email, we open ourselves up to micro-stressors. That is, small things that can impact our mood. By scheduling times when we check media/messages, we can avoid letting others impact our day so frequently.

2 Be predictable



Like Pavlov's dog, humans quickly learn what to expect. So if your friends or colleagues learn to expect that you don't check your messages after 7pm or before 9am, they will not expect a response from you and not be disappointed. Parents can actually help reduce anxiety for their children and teens by being clear about the house rules as their friends will also know what to expect. Firm but fair can really help!

3 On your terms



A simple technique can be to turn off the notifications, badges, vibrations and sounds our phones make when someone else wants our attention. Try to keep your personal boundaries clear and look at your phone when you have time, not when someone else demands that time. Phones are clever now so you can pick and choose what you want to hear about, what's urgent and what's not. Remember every time you break your focus, it takes time to re-gain it.

Reference

*Online social interactions are associated with greater connection and more stress
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958821000816#bib29>

