



# Staying Healthy AT HOME

## DISCONNECT TO RECHARGE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

We have more ways to connect now than ever before and yet, as a society, we're lonelier than ever. Loneliness and its many associated health risks—including substance abuse, depression, and heart disease—is rapidly becoming one of the biggest threats to physical and mental well-being. While we tend to think of seniors as being at greatest risk, it's actually younger generations—those who tend to use the most social media—who report the highest rates of loneliness.

Ironic, that the technology which has allowed us to be more “connected” has actually left us feeling more alone. Research shows that the more social media platforms you use, the more stressed, anxious, isolated, and depressed you're likely to feel. In addition to giving us an unrealistic view of others' lives and increasing the tendency to “compare and despair,” social media platforms prevent us from experiencing meaningful connections; those that stem from sharing the same space with another person and being truly present. The brain is designed for real-world experiences; we need them to be happy. That's why a growing “detox” trend is all about disconnecting from our devices.

If just reading that makes you anxious, you're not alone. But there are many good reasons to do a regular “Digital Detox.” If (like most of us) you struggle with limiting your screen time, know that it's about more than willpower. Your phone buzzing with the alert of a message, getting a “like” on social media...these things provide a dopamine rush that lights up the same reward system in the brain that responds to drugs—which is why they become so addictive! In order to pull back from them, you'll need to find other ways to get that same rush of good feeling.

The good news is, you can do things to make your brain produce dopamine naturally, like getting out in the sun, giving someone a hug, listening to music, volunteering, or working on something creative. And It's important to plan ahead—make a list of things that bring you joy, things that you'd like to try, friends and loved ones with whom you'd like to connect...etc., and plan to make time for them during your break from social media. And remember, it's OK to start small! You might try doing a Digital Detox for an afternoon or evening and build from there. The more you can disconnect from your devices, the more fulfilled you'll feel.

