

Reduce Your Screen Time

Cassidy Lutz - Family and Consumer Science Agent
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Computers, phones, tablets, and smartwatches. Consumers today have more access to digital devices than ever before.

Recent studies indicate that spending hours on end staring at screens can have a large impact on your health. Lack of quality sleep, excessive eating, social isolation, low professional performance, and a lack of physical activity are all potential negative effects of spending too much time looking at screens.

The first step to combating these effects is to adjust how mindful and intentional you are with the time you spend looking at a computer, phone, or tablet screen. Experts recommend spending 3 to 4 hours daily screen-free. To help with sleep, put your devices away at least an hour before bedtime. This will allow your brain to start producing melatonin sooner, which is the hormone that helps "turn off" the brain. For eye health, take a break every 20 minutes and focus on an object at least 20 feet away. This is especially beneficial for those that work on a computer during the day as it prevents digital eye strain.

Parents of young children should be especially mindful of the amount of time they spend on screens with their young ones around. Children often mimic the behaviors they observe in their parents. If a majority of your time spent as a family includes screens, your children will likely pick up this behavior. Excessive screen time in children can lead to behavioral problems, irregular sleep, obesity, and impaired academic performance.

To become more mindful, recognize that behaviors are a choice. Every part of human behavior is driven by a choice and can be changed with a shift in thinking. Instead of simply saying that you will make a change, you need to take action to make that change happen. Next, think about the rationalizations behind your current thoughts. For example, why do you spend hours scrolling through social media sites when your time and energy could be better spent elsewhere? Lastly, think of alternatives. Reading a book, journaling, cleaning, cooking, or going for a walk are all great ways to spend your free time.

Taking control of your screen time can be challenging, but you and your entire family can benefit from this behavior change. For more information, contact Cassidy Lutz at celutz@ksu.edu or by calling 620-625-8620.

