



Health Advice

Switching off every now and then – how to reduce your media consumption

We all use digital media. Every day and everywhere. Whether it's our work or our leisure time, we spend an average of ten hours a day on the smartphone in our pocket, the PC in the office, in front of the TV or the games console at home, or on a tablet when we're out and about. Digital media make our working lives easier – and for some people their work possible in the first place – and provide us with both information and entertainment. Without it, everything would look very different: meetings with colleagues, news and videos, recipes and directions, social networks and streaming services. The media we use make our lives richer and more colourful. 95 per cent of people in Germany surf the internet, and almost everyone under the age of 50 spends time online every day. Digital natives (18 to 39-year-olds) spend as many as 93 hours a week online, which is almost four whole days. That's a lot of time. Approximately ten per cent of young people suffer from mental health problems due to excessive PC and internet use. And some adults are unable to switch off and concentrate on their work or conversations because their smartphones are buzzing away all the time. Media and internet addiction is now categorised as an addiction, like alcoholism or drug addiction.

What is media addiction?

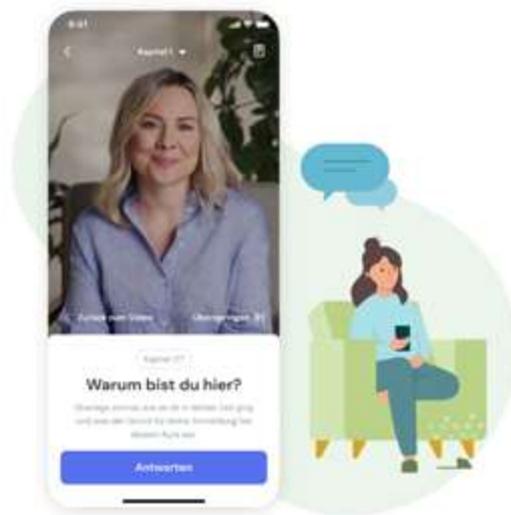
Media is everywhere: our smartphones even accompany many of us to the bathroom. There's almost no let-up. You only wanted to check the time, and your smartphone is in your hand: but then you find yourself checking your emails, replying to a WhatsApp message and checking out a few Instagram stories. Suddenly, you've been online for two and a half hours, which is the average time people spend on their smartphone per day. Social networks are particularly popular, with more than 50 million people in Germany using them. This has consequences for our mental health: while social media can make some people feel validated and like they belong, others feel stressed, lonely and suffer from impaired eyesight and sleep problems. It's also time to worry if you find yourself no longer able to switch off, you begin neglecting genuine social contacts or your work, or you start to feel restless when your smartphone isn't nearby.

Switching off for once? How it works!

Do you work at a PC? All the more reason to plan for screen-free time after work. A digital detox can also help the other people you know give their brain a break:

- Set yourself a weekly challenge with your colleagues: reduce your private weekly screen time by at least one hour. Who can do better?
- Some PC settings or apps come with functions that remind you to take a break or switch off your device.
- Wear a classic wristwatch to avoid looking at your smartphone.
- Do you need to concentrate at work? Then simply leave your smartphone in another room.
- Set fixed times for viewing something you're really interested in, then switch your device off. Don't check your emails before 8 o'clock in the morning. Only use your games console between 9 pm and 11 pm on Friday evenings.
- Switch off push notifications so that your phone only vibrates for things that are really important. Decide what's important to you in the settings.
- Whether it's a waiting room, a train journey or coffee break: breathe deeply and relax instead of looking at your smartphone.
- Think about removing apps and games from your home screen or hiding them in subfolders.
- Set a real alarm clock to wake you up so that your bedroom stays a smartphone-free zone.

- Set your screen to black and white: all of a sudden, the world of the media is no longer so tempting and colourful.
- Log out completely after using apps and choose complicated, long passwords: having to log back in again makes accessing things more difficult.
- Switch your mobile phone to flight mode more often and enjoy the peace and quiet.



Recharge your batteries and reduce stress with the HelloBetter app:

Use interactive exercises, the online diary, personal coaching via chat if necessary and more. Free for one year for BARMER members.



Discover the HelloBetter app now:
www.barmert.de/hellobetter-app

Imprint

Editor

BARMER, Axel-Springer-Straße 44, 10969 Berlin

Editorial staff

Philip Ende

Specialist Corporate Health Management

philip.ende@barmert.de

Print

Rudolf Glauco GmbH & Co. KG

Lockfinke 75

42111 Wuppertal

Illustration

Getty Images: © supersizer

© BARMER 2025

All rights reserved. Reproduction, even in extracts, only with the prior written consent of BARMER. All information has been carefully compiled and checked. However, it is possible that content is no longer current. Please understand that we cannot assume any liability for the completeness or accuracy of the content. We are always grateful for suggestions and advice.