

WELLBEING

with Heart

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DIGITAL WELLBEING

Maintaining our digital wellbeing in an increasingly fast-paced, 24/7 screen-based world is becoming more and more difficult - for adults and teen alike. The reality is that we need our screens for so much – school, work, banking, keeping in touch with loved ones, staying up-to-date with the news, and organising our busy schedules. And let's not forget that for many of us, our leisure time can be screen-based, in the form of movies, TV, gaming and social media.

How do we achieve balance in our screen use?



Banning technology outright is unrealistic – so much of our world is based on its use. Instead, we need to build healthy and sustainable digital habits for our wellbeing.

Think about our basic needs as marbles in a jar, with one marble each representing relationships/connection, sleep, play, exercise, nutrition, and sense of achievement/competency.

Fill up your jar with these marbles first, then you can add the “sand” of technology use around them. If you put the sand in the jar first, the marbles won't fit!

Tips for Better Digital Wellbeing

In a practical sense, it may be helpful to consider the following in your household as biological buffers to the negative impacts technology may have. Encourage each family member to create their own digital boundaries and limits; work collaboratively and in an empowering way within the family.

1. Human connection

Screen-free time for connecting face-to-face. Bonus points if you spend that time having fun and sharing a laugh.



2. Sleep

Uninterrupted and for an age-appropriate length of time. Keep phones out of the bedroom.

3. Digital curfew

Ideally no screens 60 minutes before bed. If you must, consider investing in some blue-light filter glasses.

4. Physical movement

60 minutes per day.



5. Sunlight and time in nature

Even better if you can have exposure to sunlight within the first hour of waking in the morning.

6. Breathe

Build strategies for better breathing using mindfulness or other breathing exercises.

7. Build stress tolerance

Get better at being uncomfortable and bored at times, rather than reaching for a device to soothe.



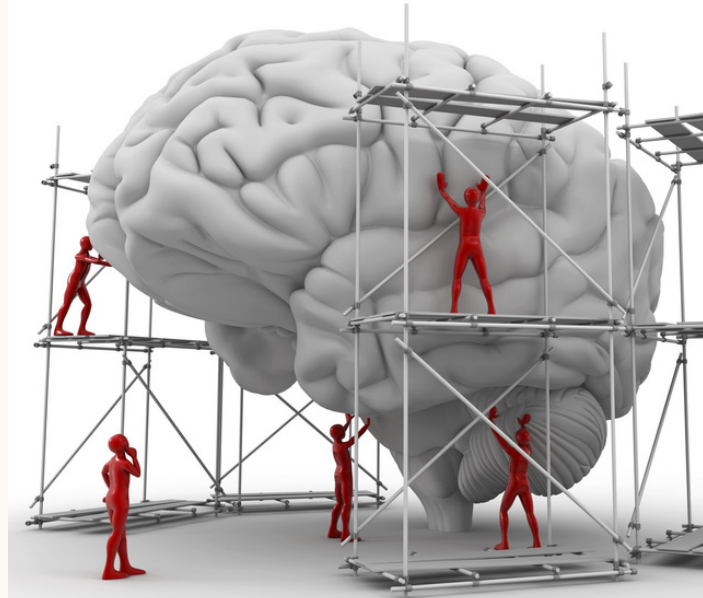
The Many Factors Fuelling our Digital Infatuation

1. PSYCHOLOGY DRIVERS

Technology can facilitate relational connections, and fulfil psychological needs for competence and control

2. NEUROBIOLOGICAL CHANGES

Research is showing the changes technology has on our brains, including social contagion effects and the way our patterns of use link in with our dopamine system (creating pathways of “feel good” reward hormones when using technology, while simultaneously hijacking the impulse control centre of our brain). Increased use of technology has also eroded a number of our natural biological stress buffers such as exercise, sleep and time in nature. We now tend to turn to our technology to “relax” when it does the opposite, and then creates a vicious cycle.



3. PERSUASIVE DESIGN OF TECHNOLOGY

Just like poker machines, tech companies have teams of incredibly smart people designing ways in which to encourage greater and greater engagement in our technology, based on neuroscience, psychology and human behaviour research. Research is showing that having our phone in sight (even if on do-not-disturb) reduces our cognitive ability by 10%, not to mention all the notifications that buzz and demand attention with little red numbers are directly designed to engender a stress state in our bodies so we prioritise them.



SOURCE

Credit for the inspiration and information behind this WBWH article goes to Dr Kristy Goodwin, her research and her presentation to the 2022 PESA Conference. <https://drkristygoodwin.com>

Chevalier College is here to support students and families in any way possible. You can contact us at wellbeing@chevalier.nsw.edu.au