



The Benefits of a Social Media Vacation

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Social media is an incredible tool. It allows us to connect, keep in touch, explore ideas or even vent a little. University of Pittsburg researchers have found a distinct correlation between use time and feelings of isolation and even clinical depression. Noted scholar Brené Brown has written extensively on the ways that social media seems to have increased fear and loneliness, both noted dangers to health and well-being.

Humans crave personal connection – it's part of why we are so attracted to social media in the first place. At the end of the day, however, talking online or looking at a friend's pictures of their children or a vacation that you didn't take can bring out the worst in us: envy, fear, comparisons and a sense that wherever we are, the grass is most definitely greener everywhere else.

A social media break is a great way to reconnect IRL (in real life) with loved ones and acquaintance's alike. It allows time for coffee, connection, hugs and smiles that stretch far beyond emoji's. If you want to take a break, but use social media for work or as a primary news source, it can be hard to figure out how to take the space you need.

Here are a few tips to get you started.

1. If you use your phone to check social media accounts, move all of the apps to a blank page, where they aren't the first thing you see when you pick up the phone. If you have to swipe three or four times to get there, you are far less likely to check in on your feeds 30 time a day.
2. Set designated times to check in on specific channels and for a specific amount of time. If you are an obsessive user, this can help you wean off slowly. Set a timer for, say, 10 minutes on Facebook at 11 a.m. and another 10 minutes on Snapchat at noon. This way, you don't endlessly scroll multiple feeds but are checked in enough to maintain a presence.
3. Let people know that you are going to take a break from one specific channel, like Facebook. Set it up the same way you would an email away message and set up an auto response bot to answer any direct messages you may receive while on your social media vacation. Post the date that you will return and then simply log off. For many of us, it will take a week to remember our passwords anyway!



4. If you use social media for work, consider taking a break from your personal accounts for an extended period of time. If you are on Twitter all day, don't check accounts for more than five minutes when you get home at night. Better yet, check your own accounts on your lunch break and power down as you leave the office, committing to family, pets, friends or any other real-life interaction when you are not at work.
5. Call up old friends. You know, the people you usually only see on Facebook. If you don't have their phone number or wouldn't want to hang out with them in person, do yourself a favor and take a day to declutter your social media friends list.
6. Track your usage for a few weeks before your planned break. There are apps that can help with this. Facebook Runner is a good one, or use any other usage tracker. If you can see that you are spending 20 minutes or more (many people spend nearly an hour) on each of several social media sites per day, it can make it easier to wrap your mind around taking a break.
7. Turn off your notifications. If you haven't done this yet...what are you waiting for? There is no reason for your social channels to cause you the same sort of anxiety as unread emails. If you miss something... let it go. The half-life of a Tweet is only 16 minutes. You'll catch the next one.
8. Install a blocker on your desktop browser that you can remove when your break is over. This will prevent you from checking certain sites until you are ready to come back. Think of it as insurance against a late-night craving...sort of like not keeping cookies in the house if you are powerless to resist their siren call at midnight.
9. Don't stop taking pictures. Just because you aren't posting your pictures for the world to see, take them anyways. You might be surprised how many fewer images you take now that you aren't digitally performing for a crowd. Be aware of that impulse and let it guide your future sharing when you come back to your accounts.
10. Finally, if you love your break so much, consider that you might not need all of your accounts. Social media is a very valuable tool in today's world, but that doesn't mean you have to be on every channel all the time. Think of it like cleaning out your closet...winnow it down to just a few essentials that you can't live without. Maybe Facebook and Twitter are your favorites but you occasionally post to Instagram or check in on Snapchat. Think about if you really need all of the accounts and consider only keeping the ones that truly bring you enjoyment.



A last piece of advice about getting too excited about breaking up with social media. Once you delete an account it is gone; and all of the photos, messages and connections that go with it. Consider simply not using the account as much, or, in the case of Facebook, simply deactivating your account which will keep it but render it inactive until you decide to reactivate it at a later date.

Social media is a wonderful tool and a great source of entertainment and connection – in the right amounts. If you feel overwhelmed by it all, consider taking a break. Like any vacation, you'll return relaxed, refreshed, and ready to take on the world.