



# Social Media Hiatus:

## Why It's Important to Take Breaks from Social Media

A great deal of our lives are spent online these days. With so many social media platforms to check, post on, and interact with, it can feel like we spend the entire day on our phones. Social media can be great for connecting with like-minded groups and individuals, maintaining connections with friends and family, and even finding important news and updates. However, there are significant downsides to social media which can have negative implications for our mental health and wellness.

According to the **National Centre for Health Research**, “many studies have found an association between time spent on social media as well as the number of social media platforms used, and symptoms of depression and anxiety.” Some of the ways social media can negatively impact mental health include comparison of ourselves to others, FoMO (fear of missing out), feelings of exclusion, and even cyberbullying.

However, according to a study from 2020, people who deactivated their Facebook account for a month reported lower depression and anxiety, as well as increases in happiness and life satisfaction (**National Centre for Health Research**). Breaks from social media can help to reset our perspectives and remind ourselves of the world that exists off our phones and out in the world!

Here are 5 practical tips for taking a social media hiatus:

**1. Let your friends and family know you're taking a break.** If people in your life tend to connect with you most often over social media, you can let them know you're going to be taking a social media hiatus so that they aren't worried when they don't hear from you on those platforms for a while! Provide alternative forms of connection such as phone calls, hangouts, text messaging, etc.

**2. Set a time limit.** It can feel strange to take an open-ended break from social media. You might start to feel anxious to get back on the various platforms if you don't give yourself a timeline. It can be 24 hours, 48 hours, a week, or even a month! Whatever feels manageable for you.



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**3. Find other ways to fill your time.** Social media scrolling can become such a habit that we can feel unsure of how to fill our time when we take breaks from it. Consider focusing more time on a hobby or spending more time outside or being physically active. If you're feeling like your hands are restless and need something to keep them busy, try taking up knitting or other crafts!

**4. Track your mood.** If this is your first time taking a social media hiatus, it might be a beneficial experiment to see if your mood changes while you're offline. Consider writing down how you feel when you start the hiatus and how you feel on a regular basis during your break. Tracking this might help you to take more social media breaks if you notice a difference in your mood!

**5. Take this time to work on your relationship with social media.** If you notice that you feel less anxious and/or more happy and confident when you're not using social media, take this time to reflect on why you use social media. Are there ways you can use it differently so it doesn't negatively impact your mood? Maybe consider unfollowing certain people who you compare yourself to often. Or work on practicing self-care when you see things on social media that impact your mental health in negative ways. Learning to have a healthy relationship with social media can greatly impact our mental health and wellbeing.

We can all have complicated relationships with social media. Taking a brief (or long) break from it can help a lot! By choosing to disconnect for a period, you create an opportunity to change unhelpful patterns and make your social media interactions more intentional and balanced when you decide it's time to reconnect.