University of Richmond Employee Well-being

What We Can Learn From People Who Don’t Use Social Media

Many of us spend hours every day tethered to our devices, pawing at the screen to see if it will deliver a few more likes or emails, monitoring the world and honing our online presence. Social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are supposed to make us feel more connected. Yet our reliance on technology to “see” the social world around us can be a burden.

That’s why we undertook a small study with 50 people who may seem nothing less than social outcasts in today’s screen-saturated environment. None of our participants used social media or had a mobile phone, and most even refused to email. We wanted to understand why these people had decided to switch off, and how they managed it. But rather than seeking quick fixes for overuse, we explored the principles and values that drove our participants to live the way they do. Much has already been written about how we can switch off — but that won’t achieve much, unless we really feel the benefits.

1. Spending More Time with Others. Part of the problem with social networking platforms is that we don’t just use them for communicating — they also promote a particular way of being connected to and supportive of those around us. These interactions are channeled through the platform to create data, which is ultimately fed back to data brokers and marketers.

Our participants shared a deep belief in, and attachment to, a different way of socializing that’s focused on expression, touching, talking and being in the same space, physically. For them, this helped to maintain a feeling of human bonding and connection. For many people today, the sense of being “always-on” is generating a desire to achieve greater balance and disengage from the things that are causing them stress. For our participants, who didn’t use smartphones and social media, time with others was associated with a sense of calm and purpose in life.

2. Switching Off Is Not Missing Out. Our participants questioned what exactly is “social” about social media:

what constitutes communication, and what do we get from the way that social stuff is measured on online platforms — whether that’s friendship, support or social contact. Rather than having hundreds of “friends”, they would always choose to see people face to face and nurture relationships that would support them through the tough times. Taking the opportunity to switch off may, at first, cause some anxiety. But the trick is to realize that switching off is not the same as missing out. When you first switch off, you may spend more time in your own company. But from these moments may come a realization of how exhausting it is to sustain online connections, and indeed how superficial it is to be locked in endless exchanges of trivial information.

3. Being, Rather than Doing. Many of those who switched off enjoyed new-found vitality, because they found time to connect with the world in the here and now. This is crucial to helping us reset and relax, so that we are prepared for more stressful times. Time spent scrolling through content may feel as though it makes light demands on body and mind. But the visual interference from a bright screen is far from relaxing. You are much less likely to have restful sleep if you share a bed with your smartphone, or surf to sleep.

Our disconnected group told us that we should be more critical of our use of apps and start leaving our phone behind. If mindfulness is a state of being focusing on the present — channeling thoughts, feelings and sensations as they flow through us — then what use is a screen? Constant connection paradoxically results in less free time, and periods when we are able to think without interruption give precious refuge from the demands of daily life.

Source: The Conversation
Yo U R Compliance Connection with Kris Henderson, Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator—New Title IX Regulations

On May 6, 2020, the Department of Education issued new Title IX regulations governing how schools, including the University of Richmond, address reports of sexual misconduct involving faculty, staff and students on campus. These regulations went into effect on August 14, 2020. The Title IX office, in consultation with other offices on campus, worked over the summer to develop interim policies and procedures that comply with the regulations. These interim policies can be found on the Title IX webpage, prevent.richmond.edu, under the Title IX heading. The Title IX office will be reaching out with opportunities for the campus community to provide input on these interim policies. The Title IX office has also established a submission form to allow for online feedback on the interim policies. This submission form is located on the Center for Awareness, Response, and Education (CARE) website.

While the regulations have required certain change to the University’s prior policies, what is not changing is the University’s commitment to preventing sexual misconduct on campus and supporting survivors of sexual assault, no matter their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or expression. The University will continue to respond promptly to all reports of any type of sexual misconduct and will continue to investigate and adjudicate reports in a manner that is fair and equitable to all parties involved.

Remember, compliance is a shared responsibility!

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Healthy Cooking: Chewy Peanut Butter Granola Bars

**Ingredients:**
- 1/2 cup natural peanut butter
- 1 1/2 tbsp. coconut oil
- 3 tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/3 ground flaxseed
- 1 tbsp. chia seeds
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/3 cup chopped almonds or pecans
- 1/4 cup shredded coconut

**For topping**
- 2 tbsp. chopped almonds
- 2 tbsp. dark chocolate
- 1/2 tsp. coconut oil

**Directions:**
1. Add peanut butter, coconut oil, honey, vanilla, and cinnamon to a saucepan, and place over low heat. Stir every so often until the mixture is smooth and creamy. Remove from heat and stir in flaxseed, chia seeds, and oats. Fold in almonds and coconut.
2. Line an 8x4 inch loaf pan with parchment paper; pour granola bar mixture in and spread out evenly. Press in the pan very firmly. Press remaining almonds for topping into the top.
3. Microwave the dark chocolate and coconut oil together for 30-second increments until the chocolate is melted and creamy. Drizzle diagonally over the bars.
4. Freeze for 15-20 minutes or refrigerate for 30-60 minutes until the bars have hardened. Remove from pan and cut into 8 bars. Bars last for a week in the fridge.
Educational Corner: It’s Flu Shot Season!

Flu season will look different this year, as the country grapples with a coronavirus pandemic that has already killed more than 176,000 people. Although sometimes incorrectly regarded as just another bad cold, flu also kills tens of thousands of people in the United States each year, with the very young, the elderly and those with underlying conditions the most vulnerable. When coupled with the effects of Covid-19, public health experts say it’s more important than ever to get a flu shot. If enough of the US population gets vaccinated — more than the 45% who did last flu season — it could help head off a nightmare scenario in the coming winter of hospitals stuffed with both Covid-19 patients and those suffering from severe effects of influenza.

As flu season approaches, here are some answers to some common questions.

Q: When should I get my flu shot?

Many pharmacies and clinics will start immunizations in early September. Generally, influenza viruses start circulating in mid- to late October but become more widespread later, in the winter. It takes about two weeks after getting a shot for antibodies — which circulate in the blood and thwart infections — to build up. “Young, healthy people can begin getting their flu shots in September, and elderly people and other vulnerable populations can begin in October,” said Dr. Steve Miller, chief clinical officer for insurer Cigna. The CDC has recommended that people “get a flu vaccine by the end of October,” but noted it’s not too late to get one after that because shots “can still be beneficial and vaccination should be offered throughout the flu season.”

Q: Why should I get a flu shot?

Get a shot because it provides protection against the flu and, thereby, from spreading it to others, which may help lessen the burden on hospitals and medical staff. While a flu shot won’t prevent Covid-19, getting one could help your doctors differentiate between the two diseases if you develop any symptoms — fever, cough, sore throat — they share. And even though flu shots won’t prevent all cases of the flu, getting vaccinated can lessen the severity if you do fall ill.

Q: How effective is this year’s vaccine?

Flu vaccines — which must be developed anew each year because influenza viruses mutate — range in effectiveness annually, depending on how well they match the circulating virus. Last year’s formulation was estimated to be about 45% effective in preventing the flu overall, with about a 55% effectiveness in children. The vaccines available in the US this year are aimed at preventing at least three different strains of the virus, and most cover four. It isn’t yet known how well this year’s supply will match the strains that will circulate in the US Early indications from the Southern Hemisphere, which goes through its flu season during our summer, are encouraging. There, people practiced social distancing, wore masks and got vaccinated in greater numbers this year — and global flu levels are lower than expected. Experts caution, however, not to count on a similarly mild season in the US, in part because masking and social distancing efforts vary widely.

Source: CNN Health
Karen’s Korner, Karen Hensley, UR Dietician: Nutrition and Sleep

We know that eating a healthy, nutrient-rich diet is important for our overall health, but we don’t often think about how what we eat affects our sleep or how our sleep affects what we eat. Eating a balanced diet allows the body to absorb important nutrients and provide the brain with the chemical environment it needs to maintain adequate sleep.

Below are some facts about how different parts of a healthy diet may affect the way you sleep:

1. **Caffeine.** Caffeine stays in the bloodstream for up to six hours after consumption, so a coffee or soda after dinner may keep you awake throughout the night. Drinking water or decaffeinated coffee with and after dinner are some good options instead.

2. **Protein.** Research suggests that lower protein intake was associated with both short and long sleep times, but higher protein intake has been linked to less difficulty falling asleep. Incorporating foods like chicken, turkey, salmon, and plant-based protein like tofu, beans, and tempeh are great ways to increase protein intake.

3. **Carbohydrates.** Complex carb and fiber intake results in less difficulty with maintaining sleep and less feelings of sleepiness throughout the day. Eating excess sugar will directly affect your blood glucose and your energy levels throughout the day. Examples of complex carbs include whole grains like brown rice and oatmeal, nuts and seeds, and sweet potatoes.

4. **Fats.** There is limited research regarding fat intake and sleep. One study suggests that increased fat consumption was not associated with adverse sleep, but a low-fat diet was associated with nonrestorative sleep and excessive sleepiness throughout the day. Adequate fat intake is important, you can do this by increasing unsaturated fats like olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds and decreasing red meat intake, fast food, and desserts.

While research is still being done on the relationship between diet and sleep, eating a variety of foods and limiting added sugars and solid fats will benefit your overall health and your sleep.