

30 Days Instagram Free

I pride myself on being virtually vice free. There's that old expression, "everyone has a vice". I contemplate this sometimes and wonder what my vice might be. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't even drink coffee, I don't watch porn, I don't eat junk food, I work out often, I like to read and I enjoy the sauna, and I don't even really watch TV. In fact, I don't even own a TV. I don't use TikTok, I don't use snapchat. I used to spend a lot of time scrolling on Tumblr but I managed to kick that habit as well. I don't look down upon those who don't do those things, I'm just striving for a life of optimization, and eliminating these things help me feel my best, and allows me to channel my energy into more important things. And I'm happy, happier than almost people I know my age.

But there is that **one** little thing.

I spend upwards of an hour and a half a day on instagram.

And I feel really bad about myself when I do.

I can justify this in a few ways. I've moved away from a lot of friends, instagram is a place to keep up with them!

But am I really keeping up with them?

My reels are great, they're full of homesteading and recipe videos!

Yeah but how often a day do the mind numbing videos creep in and take you down a rabbit hole you shouldn't be in.

Multiple times.

And at the end of the day, how much time did you spend on instagram that could've been spent doing something more productive. A chapter of a book, working on an article, going

to the gym or playing with the dog.

So I've decided delete instagram off my phone for 30 days.

I don't expect this to be easy for me, and I don't know what my plans are after these 30 days are up. I love to post photos like a digital journal to look back on, and I probably will keep doing that. My friends send me videos but I think I can live without them, and I think once I kick the doom scrolling habit, I won't miss much.

I recently challenged myself to buy no new clothes or house wares for a month and that was difficult at first but then it become sort of freeing, and since then I've been much more intentional about what I purchase.

So if I do go back to instagram after 30 days, I'm hoping that this can serve as somewhat of a mental reset and provide some intention for me when I return.

DAY 1

Upon day one I was quite sure that I needed this challenge because I realized over several hours in the car (I drive a lot for work) I wanted to check instagram at EVERY red light! A reflex, a switch in my brain, the car has stopped, time to check instagram, and every time I had to remind myself that it was no longer on my phone.

Sounds a little bit like a junkie if you ask me.

So now instead I will occasionally check my todo list, or better yet, not touch my phone.

On day 2 I woke up and journaled, which I usually do anyways, after about 30 minutes of instagram scrolling while sill in bed. I try not expose myself to the light early in the morning by keeping a red light filter on, but if something interesting enough captures my eye, I'll turn it off, and then I'm even more likely to get sucked into the doom scrolling.

One day I'd love to start my mornings barefoot in the grass but I live in Detroit and there's broken glass in my back yard and it just doesn't quite have the ideal Set up for barefoot mornings and sunlight.

So I started my day without instagram and by 9am I have made breakfast, talked to our route driver and sent the route to her, checked the emails, journaled, made some big batches of ginger lemonade, prepared 3 loaves of bread for the next stage of proofing, cleaned the kitchen, and written this article introduction.

Honestly, I'm not jonesing for a dopamine hit, nor was I yesterday unless I was at a red light, but I have plenty to do and numerous other outlets to keep myself entertained if the work ever runs out.

Social media and our young people

Social media has provided some amazing things to our society and overall for the adult population I can't say rather or not is more of a net negative or net positive, but I know that for young children the addiction to the screen is doing some intense damage to their developing brains. The facts are in, this is not good for our young people.

I wasn't an iPad kid. Born in 2001 to a mother of 18, I often felt on the cusp of millennial and gen z but I am squarely in the gen z age range. I grew up with cartoons and I had a flip phone at the age of 9. I was 12 when I got social media, and every day I thank god that I didn't have it earlier. I wish I would have waited longer but all things considered I turned out all right. However, this is so rarely the case today. Abigail Shrier covers this in her most recent book "Bad Therapy: Why Kids today aren't growing up" Shrier talks about a very interesting phenomena facing young people today. We are the generation with the most access to "mental health resources" and yet, we are by far the most mentally ill

generation. Why is that? Many reasons, but a huge factor, based on the most recent research, social media.

Take this article from Yale Medicine or this one from Mayo Clinic , this from the child mind institute

Really any article from a quick google search will tell you about the negative impact social media has on young people. Unlike certain things this is not information you have to search for. Who's to say the effect on adults is all that much better?

Half way update

It's May 12th, about half way through my instagram free journey. I'm pleased to say my urge to doom scroll has dissipated. I no longer get the urge to reach for my phone and scroll when I hit every red light.

My screen time is down significantly. From 7-9 hours a day to typically somewhere between 4-5. Nine hours a day is too high, as is five hours in my opinion and it's not taking into consideration my computer time, but there's no doom scrolling happening on there and it's all for work. Ideally my screen time would be between 1-2 hours a day, but I use google maps for several hours a day on route for work or running errands. I also listen to podcasts on Spotify and YouTube and sometimes leave the screen playing on accident, both of these contribute to several hours of screen time a day.

Anyone know a good way to track screen time that doesn't account for google maps and other time not actually spent on the phone?

I no longer spend my mornings doom scrolling and am spending more time journaling and reading, which I already do quite a bit of but am excited about incorporating more of.

I will confess that on 2 occasions I have looked at instagram

messages on a web browser or my iPad. I was expecting (hoping) for a message that never came. Thus making the whole thing, not worth it.

Over all, I'm feeling really good about being pretty much entirely social media free, and am not 100% sure what plans are for the end of this month after this challenge. I love posting photos on instagram and I've found that I'm documenting things through photos less than I would previously. This is a side effect that has both pros and cons in my opinion. I love photography and I love documenting moments but I'm on my phone less and in the moment more which I think has benefits, obviously.

I may start scrapbooking or keeping a photo album so I have some place to document and look back on, or maybe just download instagram periodically to post and then delete it again. There are some instagram accounts that I miss keeping up with. This feels very silly, I'm not missing much I realized I also use instagram to research, restaurants in the area, thrift shops, markets, it seems like instagram has its finger on the pulse of what's relevant in a way that google doesn't. And of course, there are the hundreds of recipes I have saved that I swore I was going to make one day.

I can honestly say that I'm not missing much from my friends or other people I used to follow. I realize I've been out of the loop- apparently there's beef with Kendrick Lamar and Drake, I was so out of the loop I heard about this on a Joe Rogan podcast. And that's another thing I miss sometimes, I used to see who was hanging out with Joe Rogan and know who the next podcast guest was, and now I just have to wait until they come out.

In some ways I worry about losing touch- what are the young people doing and talking about (I'm 23, and even I can't keep up) what if I become the 23 year old equivalent of a weird home schooled kid (I already don't have many friends) but at

the same time, what's being in tune with social media compared to being in tune with what's around me.

I don't come home and sit on the couch and scroll anymore. I'll read or journal, look at my Todoist, or better yet, just get straight to work because there is always another project to do.

Ultimately why I wanted to give up social media

I have this philosophy in life that leading by example is one of the highest form of authenticity and good. I don't have kids yet but I examined this first in my younger siblings (aged 15, 8, and 11 at time of publishing)

Kids are a mirror into our own behavior and I began to see things in my younger siblings that I didn't like in myself.

Of course, that's not to say that it was all bad. They mirrored some good things too. But I began to look at habits and behaviors in my life like this: Is this a good or bad habit, and do I want my future kids to exhibit this behavior or habit?

If the answer is no, then the next questions is: Why am I still doing this? Could I justify this behavior or habit that I'm exhibiting to my future kids, even though I don't want them to do it?

And lastly: What can I do to eliminate this habit and lead by example?

The greatest example I have of this is drinking. Why am I drinking? Because it's fun, it makes social outings more enjoyable, and all of my friends are doing it.

Do I want my kids doing this? No, absolutely not. There are no positive side effects to drinking, and the health impacts are severe.

Can I justify this to my kids even though it's something I don't want them doing? No. Not really. Just because I'm an adult doesn't make it healthy, worth it, or right to drink, given how I feel about it personally.

What can I do to change this? I quit drinking. I wasn't an alcoholic. I didn't have problems with drinking. But I had nothing to lose and everything to gain by quitting, so I did.

One by one I went through things like this in my personal life and eliminated (or continue to try) to eliminate habits that I don't want my kids to have.

Which leads us here. Do I want my kids to use social media? No! The jury is in, it's wrecking our kids. They can absolutely live without it and be better for it. Therefore, it's time for me to start to lead by example. Of course these kids don't exist yet but my younger siblings look up to me and mirror my behavior. I think eliminating or severely limiting social media is a great way to lead by example.

Last week

We're reaching our last week of no instagram on my phone, although I don't intend to go back when it's over.

At my peak I was able to get my screen time down to an average of 2 hours a day which is pretty incredible in todays day and age, especially considering google maps usage.

I would like to continue to limit my screen time as much as possible. I've found that when I have my iPad charged, I am susceptible to looking at instagram, I don't tend to dive very deep into the rabbit hole, but I will check my messages, and check up on those aforementioned accounts I miss and then close the app.

There's no longer all this stuff I'm checking up on, and therefore nothing to see. I get bored rather quickly, and

while I still find the occasional funny or interesting reel, I don't receive the same dopamine hit, or crave the next dopamine hit quite the way I did when I was stuck in my addictive cycle. Unfortunately for me, setting an app timer or even getting an external app to limit my screen time doesn't help me restrict certain apps. I'll simply bypass the protocols I have set up, and do it anyways. For me, the solution was the go cold turkey until I felt like the addictive cycle had been broken.

Here are some better habits I've replaced with my desire to doom scroll.

Reading a couple pages of a book when I feel my attention span shrinking from the task at hand.

Writing a journal entry, I find that one page takes about 3-5 minutes and is a sufficient reset for me mentally.

Checking my Todoist, and monitoring my progress on important tasks.

Looking at Pinterest and finding inspiration for current projects or future goals. I've been creating Pinterest boards for certain future aspirations and I've been enjoying it, but I'm not addicted to it, it doesn't feed the addictive side of my brain like social media does, and I usually spend 10-15 minutes building a board and then move on to something else.

One month follow up

It's been a month since the end of my 30 days of instagram free challenge and I am here to report that I have not redownloaded the app on my phone. I do continue to check it sometimes and I have come to find that there are some people whose content I enjoy and seek out, but I'll check on them occasionally and then move on. I no longer feel the need to doom scroll. I still post and keep up with documenting memories for my own sake, but I would still like to start

scrapbooking at some point.

Life is genuinely better since I eliminated my social media addiction, and I now feel qualified and capable to help prevent my future kids from developing the same problem that everyone else in the younger generation has.

Like I said earlier in this article, the verdict is in. Social media is not good for us, and it's wreaking havoc on a young generation of kids who have never known life without it. Taking a step back and evaluating the relationship that you have with social media as an individual can be instrumental to see this crisis more clearly, and helping others. As adults, it's up to us to lead by example and set limitations and expectations for young people. We can do this by consuming content more consciously, as well as limiting our overall consumption of content, and encouraging our friends to do the same.