

Digital Disconnection

Zines for Neurodivergent Teens presents:

Contents

- Why "turning off your phone" isn't as easy as it seems
- Discussion: The Plight of Digital Disconnection
- Strategies to Improve Digital Well-being
- Analog Activities

Why "turning off your phone" isn't as easy as it seems

Did you know?

Digital media is designed to keep you online; algorithms and infinite scrolling make it easy to spend long periods of time consuming digital content. The Dopamine Reward Loop shows how easy it is to become addicted to digital media. 48% of the world's population has phone addiction.

☆ "Social media provides access to instant gratification, constant stimulation, and constant rewards."

- Clifford Sussman, MD,
George Washington
University

48% of the world's population has phone addiction.

has phone addiction.

There are many digital detox strategies that may work for you!

reduce your phone

- constantly checking your phone?
- Not completing important tasks?
- Feeling anxious without your phone?
- Spending too much time scrolling online?
- Irritated by delayed gratification?

Are you:

How to reduce phone

- Set limits for yourself
- Uninstall unnecessary apps
- Make phone-free zones
- Replace scrolling with a hobby

- ☹️ Use Do Not Disturb
- ★ Set up real-world rewards
- 😊 Use a physical planner or notebook
- ★ Charge your phone outside of your bedroom

Activities and more!

Dopamine Menu

Small tasks to increase your happy chemicals

Final Professional Output
by Megan Aikens
& Holly Summerhayes

Create your own zine!
Examples and instructions
included in the QR Code

Digital Detox Activities



[Catalogue of Digital Detox Activities](#)



Data Detox X
Youth Activity
Book

Strategies to Improve Digital Well-being

Screen time is not the enemy. Reflecting on your own benefits and disadvantages with digital technology can help reduce negative habits.

Instead of checking your phone when you are low on dopamine, consider these activities instead!

Punch cards with small goals like going on a walk, finishing a book, or hang out with friends!

GET YOUR DAILY D.O.S.E.
How to get your daily D.O.S.E.

How to Prioritize Happy Chemicals

1 What are the Happiness Chemicals?

- HORMONES**
 - Chemical messengers that affect almost every function in the body
 - Some hormones are responsible for growth and development
 - Some hormones are responsible for metabolism
 - Some hormones are responsible for reproduction
 - Some hormones are responsible for mood
- NEUROTRANSMITTERS**
 - Chemical messengers that transmit signals between nerve cells
 - Some neurotransmitters are responsible for movement
 - Some neurotransmitters are responsible for sensation
 - Some neurotransmitters are responsible for thought
 - Some neurotransmitters are responsible for emotion
- ENZYMES**
 - Chemical catalysts that speed up chemical reactions
 - Some enzymes are responsible for digestion
 - Some enzymes are responsible for energy production
 - Some enzymes are responsible for cell division
 - Some enzymes are responsible for tissue repair
- VITAMINS**
 - Chemical compounds that are essential for health
 - Some vitamins are responsible for growth
 - Some vitamins are responsible for energy production
 - Some vitamins are responsible for cell division
 - Some vitamins are responsible for tissue repair
- MINERALS**
 - Chemical elements that are essential for health
 - Some minerals are responsible for growth
 - Some minerals are responsible for energy production
 - Some minerals are responsible for cell division
 - Some minerals are responsible for tissue repair

2 How Deficiency Affects You

- HORMONES**
 - Growth hormone deficiency: Stunted growth, low energy, depression
 - Thyroid hormone deficiency: Weight gain, fatigue, depression
 - Cortisol deficiency: Low blood pressure, low energy, depression
 - Insulin deficiency: High blood sugar, weight gain, depression
 - Testosterone deficiency: Low energy, depression, sexual dysfunction
- NEUROTRANSMITTERS**
 - Serotonin deficiency: Depression, anxiety, insomnia
 - Dopamine deficiency: Depression, lack of motivation, Parkinson's disease
 - Norepinephrine deficiency: Depression, fatigue, low blood pressure
 - GABA deficiency: Anxiety, insomnia, seizures
 - Glutamate deficiency: Depression, fatigue, cognitive impairment
- ENZYMES**
 - Lactase deficiency: Bloating, diarrhea, weight loss
 - Amylase deficiency: Poor digestion, weight loss
 - Lipase deficiency: Poor digestion, weight loss
 - Protease deficiency: Poor digestion, weight loss
 - Nuclease deficiency: Poor digestion, weight loss
- VITAMINS**
 - Vitamin A deficiency: Dry skin, night blindness, immune system problems
 - Vitamin B12 deficiency: Fatigue, weakness, depression
 - Vitamin C deficiency: Scurvy, poor wound healing, immune system problems
 - Vitamin D deficiency: Bone pain, depression, immune system problems
 - Vitamin E deficiency: Nerve damage, muscle weakness, immune system problems
- MINERALS**
 - Calcium deficiency: Bone loss, osteoporosis, muscle cramps
 - Iron deficiency: Anemia, fatigue, weakness
 - Zinc deficiency: Immune system problems, skin problems, depression
 - Magnesium deficiency: Muscle cramps, fatigue, depression
 - Potassium deficiency: Muscle weakness, fatigue, depression

Make sure you prioritize happy chemicals

The Plight of Digital Disconnection

How important is digital disconnection for those who are neurodiverse? Very important, according to the authors of "Digital disconnections as a plight or right? A manifesto to re-imagine digital disconnection as a reasonable accommodation."

Key Highlights

- Impaired capacity for self-regulation** is often exploited in a world where digital technologies demand our constant attention.
- This creates what the authors call the "triple trap":
1. **Addictive Design**: technologies made to capture and

Addictive Design

- 2. **Digital First:** Everything is moving online!
- 3. **Always-on Society:** You're expected to **always** be available.
- Results in: **Making it harder to disconnect**, being seen as unproductive; managing sensory overload.
- Solution: A paradigm shift that views digital disconnection as a legal accommodation.

where companies are more concerned with profit than mental health and wellness.

Solution

So, how can the neurodivergent engage in digital disconnection? The authors argue that a paradigm shift is needed to address an existing disadvantage. If tackling disadvantages with technology is possible, could tools and strategies not also be created that help neurodiverse persons disconnect as well? When someone chooses to disconnect, there needs to be mechanisms in place to ensure their social life is not jeopardized and that they are not labelled negatively as "unproductive". These mechanisms can be achieved through government intervention, resulting in a shift in how we view our digital environments. Governments can start by implementing non-digital services and digital disconnection-friendly legislation.

Vanden Abeele, M. M. P., Martens, M., Anrijs, S., Van Bruyssel, S., & de Segovia Vicente, D. (2025). Digital disconnection as a plight or right?: A manifesto to re-imagine digital disconnection as a reasonable accommodation. In E. Kuzelewska, E. Lievens, V. Verdoordt, & D. Kloza (Eds.), *The Right Not to Use the Internet* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 121-137). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003528401-10>

Want to
learn
more?

Ignore

Star

Resources



Scholarly Sources



These resources are books and research articles regarding neurodivergent groups and digital technology. See below for blogs and activities!



If a resource mentions specific disorders that you don't have, it is still worth it to check out the resource! Neurodiversity has many overlapping symptoms and you might find something useful in unexpected places!

Untitled - TextEdit

File Edit View Help



Andreasen, D. L. & Kanstrup, A. M. (2019). Digital Relations among Youth with Cognitive Disabilities: A Field Study of Technology Use for Developing and Maintaining Social Relations. Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3328320.3328394>



Beattie, A. (2025). ADHD and digital disconnection: Exploring inclusive and practical approaches. Media, Culture & Society, 47(4), 805-814. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437251326482>

Success on the Spectrum

Practical Strategies for Engaging Neurodiverse Audiences in Arts and Cultural Organizations
Emily Wiskera, Anna Smith, Tina Sue Fletcher, Lynda Wilbur, Francis Yong Chen

Phone Addiction



File Edit View Help



[Digital Detox for Kids \(That's Actually Neurodiversity-Friendly\)](#)
Amanda Armstrong, M.Ed



[ADHD Youth and Digital Media Use](#)
Institute of Digital Media and Child Development



[Neurodivergent Kids and Screen Time](#)
Child Mind Institute



[ADHD and Phone Addiction: 11 Ways to Beat Distraction in 2026](#)
ADHD Specialist (Medically Reviewed)



[Ways to Get Off Your Phone: 10 Helpful Tips To Cut Down on Screen Time](#)
Neurospicy Nonsense

Activities



Pinterest and social media platforms have many great creators showing off their work!

Start



[Heyzine Flipbook Maker](#)

cool_video.mp4



[A zine about making zines!](#)
American Library Association



[Reward Punch Cards](#)
on Lemon8



[Build a dopamine menu!](#)
UBC Science Blog



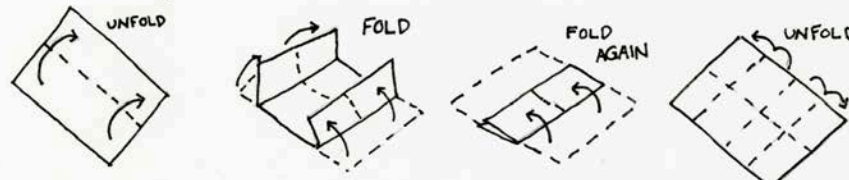
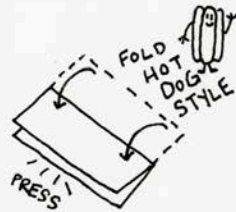
[Build an Analog Bag!](#)
Mia Clancy on Dorm Therapy



FOLD A MINI ZINE

(8 PAGES)

MATERIALS
• 8 1/2 x 11 PAPER
• PAIR OF SCISSORS



FROM THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA ZINE RESOURCES LIBGUIDE

OUTLIERS: TEACHING & LEARNING BEYOND THE NORMS



Check out the Mad Student Zine: [Outliers](#), authored by 25 neurodivergent students and alumni about their experiences in post-secondary education

