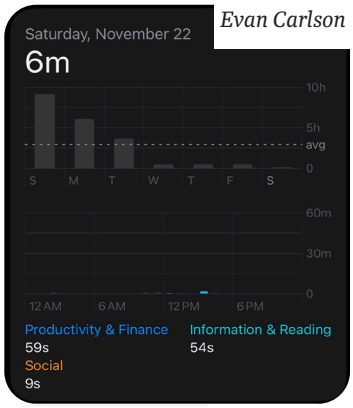
WEEKLY REPORT AVAILABLE

We stayed off our phones; here is what happened

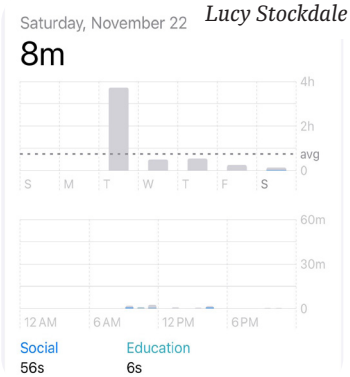
By Evan Carlson

SCREEN TIME OF STAFF WHILE ON "SCREEN DETOX"

Evan Carlson



Lucy Stockdale



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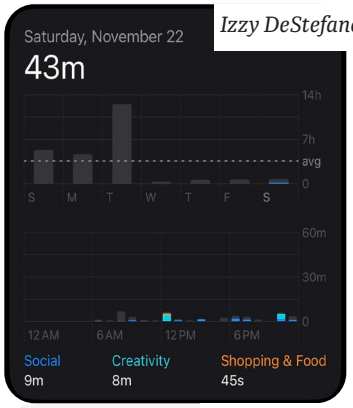
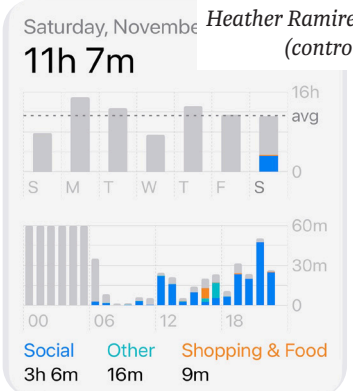


Heather Ramirez (control)



OVERVIEW

With lowering literacy, shortening attention spans, seemingly no comprehension skills, and a slowly eroding society, things can begin to seem hopeless. Without a light at the end of this no-reading tunnel, it may seem easy to just give up, but there has to be a way to fight the comprehension crisis. We then thought: what is the one thing that we are always glued to, the one thing that actively dumbs us down, and the one thing that draws us away from society? Our phones. The most obvious solution was a technological break, or a phone detox, which would ideally allow us to break our technology addiction and hopefully force us to touch grass, or something similarly real. If the pilgrims could be entertained by a hoop and a stick, surely we too could survive without technology for five days?

IMPROVEMENTS

So we did it; we gave up our phones for five days, allowing ourselves no more than an hour's usage. This phone detox saw numerous successes. The first thing we noticed was that we were much more productive. Without watching Instagram reels every morning, our get-ready times got cut in half. With that, we experienced less anxiety without our phones. It felt as if a weight had been lifted off our shoulders, like we had finally been freed from our technological overlords. Without any doom scrolling before bed, we all got better sleep and became much less irritable. Additionally, instead of spending all free time on social media, we consistently completed our assignments and had better quality work. Although, one of the most enjoyable aspects was finding actual real-life activities to do. As a substitution for Spotify, we listened to the radio, CDs, or vinyl records. As a replacement for Tiktok, we read books instead. Most importantly, as a stand-in for constantly texting, we interacted with people in person. In total, all the little changes in our everyday lives felt like our brains were being spoonfed peace, knowledge, and a sense of tranquillity.

DRAWBACKS

While there were many pleasant parts of this detox, there were also consequences. On the first day of the detox, we all immediately felt an immense sense of boredom. Without constant screen simulation and dopamine release, life left stale and almost medieval. We felt isolated from the world as we began to wonder how many new trends we were missing each second we weren't online. While we felt less anxiety, we found it much harder to decompress after a stressful day without being able to mindlessly scroll and slowly rot in our beds. As our brains got quieter and quieter, we were left with the thoughts we ever so often try to drown out with our phones. Something else that we often don't recognize is how important of a tool our phones are, and we soon realized that we couldn't get anywhere without a GPS. Both literally and spiritually, we felt lost without our phones.

CONCLUSION

All in all, was this detox even worth it? While we may not be instantly becoming Amish and abandoning all screens until the end of time, this experience was a good first step to a more in-person life. After the detox ended, our phones began to feel less entertaining. It was like when parents cut holes in their baby's pacifier so they don't like it anymore. Our once soothing screen pacifiers now have a big cut, making scrolling a snoozefest. Something we learned is how much the world is reliant on technology. We often instinctively reached for our phones and then thought, "Wait, I can't do that." We often had to deny ourselves from taking photos, liking someone's Instagram post, or looking something up on Google. This detox partially felt like kicking away the crutches that seemed to hold social connections up. Finally, this detox should encourage everyone to put the phone down. In the end, we had fun and enjoyed living in the moment and actually touching grass during these five days. It is often said that when people die, their lives flash before their eyes, and we should all ask ourselves how much of that flash will be a screen. We hope everyone reading this will start to ponder on the impact of our phones and technology on our reading skills and how the diminishment of those skills and the influx of thoughtless scrolling impacts our intelligence, emotions, and lives.

Design byRonna Tu