How to Unplug This Summer

Now that the summer weather is here, and the great outdoor beckons, it is a terrific time to re-evaluate our relationship with technology.

I believe in honest conversations, and because of that I need to start this blog out with an admission of guilt. I was initially reluctant to enter the technological world, but something has happened to me along the way. My admission is that my curiosity got the best of me, and despite my stumbling, I have come to like it. In fact, I like it a lot!

As a parent I was cautious about putting too much technology in the hands of my children—my children were the last ones of their grade to get a gaming system, a cell phone and Facebook. I was so proud that we made it to the end of Grade 8 before my children had a phone. I am a parenting educator, and a child and family therapist, so I know the research around the danger of too much technology on the growing mind.

I did manage to hold the fort long enough that my children learned how to have a conversation with somebody face to face far before they learned how to text a conversation. Actually my teenagers appear to be handling their technology very well, and are able to self-regulate with a bit of guidance and limit setting on our part. Little did I know that I would become the one who was constantly checking my Facebook, thinking about my new post and spending many lost hours scrolling through my newsfeed.

I am surprised how technology has come to play such a large role in my life, and how difficult it is for me to disengage from the lure of my electronic devices. If I am not on my phone, I am on my iPad. I have even managed to turn my old phone into an iPod filled with my favorite music, because I seem to need yet another device.

This might not be so embarrassing if I wasn’t a professional therapist who commonly gives out advice to parents on how to manage electronics with their children. Yes, I have been humbled by my growing fascination with technology, and the increasing space it has been taking up in my own life.

My summer unplugging plan is:

1. Use self-discipline and limit my own use of technology. Set some time frames that allow me peace and quiet.

2. Read a book outside, or in bed, rather than skimming through Facebook newsfeed or other electronic distractions.

3. Check in with my senses before jumping into technology. What am I seeing, smelling, feeling, hearing and tasting? Get in my body and ground myself before I venture into technological terrain.

4. Review my contact lists on social media and make sure I am connected with people who I truly am connected with. It is overwhelming when our newsfeed gets cluttered up with people we do not know. Are we truly interested in each other?

5. Play outside or just go for a technology free walk. Pay attention to my mindful movements one step at a time. Breathe in the moment.

We experience our greatest joy when we are in the moment, and we are truly present in our lives. From a place of presence we can connect with ourselves and others. It is time to unplug from my technology and plug back into my actual life. So this summer I have a plan to dig in deeper, go outside, and stay present and reconnect with what is truly important. Good luck and, yes, I will still be checking in on my social media but within a reasonable time frame.

Source: Huffington Post
Educational Corner: What Is Alzheimer’s Disease?

Alzheimer’s disease can seem frightening, mysterious and daunting. There are still a lot of unknowns about the disease. Here are answers to some common questions:

Sometimes I forget what day it is or where I put my glasses. Is this normal aging, or am I developing Alzheimer’s?

Just because you forgot an item on your grocery list doesn’t mean you are developing dementia. The memory problems that characterize warning signs of Alzheimer’s are usually more frequent, and they begin to interfere with safe or competent daily functioning: forgetting to turn off the stove, leaving home without being properly dressed or forgetting important appointments. Beyond that, the disease usually involves a decline in other cognitive abilities: planning a schedule, following multistep directions, carrying out familiar logistical tasks like balancing a checkbook or cooking a meal.

What causes Alzheimer’s?

The cause is unknown for most cases. In the vast majority of cases, Alzheimer’s disease makes its presence known after age 65, and the older one gets, the greater the risk. Aside from age, which is the single biggest risk factor, there are health issues that can increase the chances of developing Alzheimer’s. Heart and vascular problems, including stroke, diabetes and high blood pressure, appear to increase the risk of Alzheimer’s.

Is there any way to prevent Alzheimer’s?

Many researchers have been trying to figure this out. So far there is no clear answer. There are hints that behaviors that keep us healthy and engaged — exercise, healthy diet, social activities, educational activities — may keep dementia at bay for some time, probably because those behaviors promote overall brain and body health, as well as emotional well-being. But no vitamin, supplement or brain game has been found to be a magic wand.

How is Alzheimer’s diagnosed?

Diagnosing Alzheimer’s usually involves a series of assessments, including memory and cognitive tests. Clinicians will also do a thorough medical work-up to determine whether the thinking and memory problems can be explained by other diagnoses, such as another type of dementia, a physical illness or side effects from a medication.

Source: New York Times

Healthy Cooking: Black Bean Burgers

Ingredients:
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 red onion, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large carrot, shredded
- 1 15 oz. can black beans
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/4 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

To serve:
- Buns, avocado, sliced red onion, sliced tomato

Directions:
1. Preheat a large pan over medium heat, and add the olive oil. Once the oil is hot, add the red onion, garlic, and carrot. Sauté for 5 minutes or until the veggies are soft.
2. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in the spices.
3. Using a food processor, blender, or masher, blend the black beans until only a few bean chunks remain. Transfer to the bowl with the veggies, and stir in the egg and flour. Taste and add more salt, pepper, or seasonings if needed.
4. Divide the mixture into 4 patties. Put on a plate, cover in plastic wrap, and place in the fridge for 10-15 minutes.
5. Heat a large pan over medium heat, and add a bit of oil. Add the patties, and cook for 4-5 minutes per side or until they are golden and cooked through.
6. Add your toppings! Enjoy!
Why You Should Work on Self-Care

Throughout life, you’re taught to extend love outwards—to be kind to others, to share, to shower others with compassion, empathy, and generosity. Yet, when it comes to directing all those gifts to yourself, it often feels less natural.

If you’re inclined to live your life with feelings of guilt, shame, and perhaps self-loathing, it can be challenging to replace that hatred with adoration and love. You may not feel you deserve such gifts, but the reality is that you probably need them more than anyone. Your ability to love others will grow with your ability to love yourself.

Why Self-Care Is Essential

Self-compassion and self-care are integral cornerstones of healing your relationship with yourself. While it sounds easy, for many, learning to love yourself will be one of the most challenging tasks you’ll ever face. By practicing self-care, and learning to extend love toward yourself, you begin to cultivate feelings of self-worth, strength, and resiliency, leaving behind self-abuse and harmful coping mechanisms used to mask negative feelings you’ve had about yourself.

Loving yourself does not mean you are selfish or self-centred. On the contrary, loving yourself deepens your ability to care for others and broadens your capacity to love. Pointing your compassion inwards fosters increased empathy for those around you. Simply put, you can’t care for others well if you don’t care for yourself first. Self-care includes caring for your whole being, including living a balanced lifestyle (being mindful of sleep, nutrition, and exercise), exerting healthy boundaries for yourself and others, practicing self-acceptance, and becoming more mindful and aware of your thoughts, behaviors, and actions.

Here are three forms of self-care that will nourish your entire being.

- **Physical**
  Physical self-care means caring for your body internally and externally. Your physical self-care could be ensuring you get eight hours of rest every night, taking a long walk, or preparing a healthy and wholesome meal. By prioritizing things like sleep and nutrition, you can optimize your energy levels, which results in having more energy for yourself and loved ones. If you haven’t practiced physical self-care before now, take small steps to take care of your body: commit to light exercise three times per week, go to sleep 15 minutes before your normal bed time, and prepare and enjoy at least two dinners at home with a loved one each week.

- **Emotional**
  Emotional self-care is important for your overall health. You can take care of your emotional well-being by processing and verbalizing feelings with trusted friends, family members, or a therapist. You can also release negative emotions through an expressive art form such as singing, drawing, and dancing. It also helps to avoid situations and people that cause you undue emotional distress. Practice setting boundaries and learn to be in touch with your thoughts and feelings. By releasing your emotions rather than bottling them in, you can move through painful experiences that may otherwise cause you to suffer.

- **Social**
  Relationships are important, and social self-care means taking time to nurture the relationships you have. Practice social self-care by spending quality time with individuals who uplift and support you, such as friends, family, and trusted confidants. A few ways to do this may be to join a like-minded group, volunteer at special events, or sign up for new activities.

Practicing self-care in all aspects of your life can help nurture you as a whole being and leave no area of your life unattended. When you feel as though you’re being cared and loved for, you can give more to others—and this positive energy comes back to you tenfold.

Source: Chopra
SHEDDING LIGHT ON SKIN CANCER TYPES

An estimated one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. While it’s true that fair-skinned people who sunburn easily are at the highest risk, anyone can get skin cancer, no matter their skin tone. Here’s what you need to know about the different types of skin cancer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precancerous Growth</th>
<th>Most Common Skin Cancer</th>
<th>Second Most Common Skin Cancer</th>
<th>Deadliest Skin Cancer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actinic keratoses</td>
<td>Basal cell carcinoma is the most common and least deadly type of skin cancer.</td>
<td>Squamous cell carcinoma often affects fair-skinned individuals with long-term sun exposure.</td>
<td>Melanoma is the least common and most dangerous form of skin cancer. It can spread quickly to other areas of the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance: Look for dry or scaly patches or spots on the skin.</td>
<td>Appearance: It may look like a pearly bump or pinhead-sized patch of skin.</td>
<td>Appearance: It may appear as a firm red bump, scaly patch or sore.</td>
<td>Appearance: Melanomas often look like a new mole or develop within an existing mole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where: Usually start on the face, head, neck, hands and forearms.</td>
<td>Where: Common on the head, neck and arms, but can form anywhere on the body.</td>
<td>Where: Most likely to appear in areas with frequent sun exposure – e.g., face, neck, arms, chest and back.</td>
<td>Where: Most likely to start on the chest and back in men and on the legs in women, but can form anywhere on the skin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have a concern about a suspicious spot on your skin, your best move is to get it checked out. With early treatment, it’s easier to remove the cancer before it has a chance to spread.

Sources:

This is general health information and not medical advice or services. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and health care recommendations.

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