UNIVERSITIES, STUDENTS, AND SCREEN TIME

It's time for a discussion about screen time, and we're not talking about toddlers. College-age mental health issues are worse than ever before,[1] and over half of students use their devices for more than 50 hours a week.[2] Universities, here's the problem:

Two-thirds of college students struggled with loneliness in 2020, with 83% indicating that mental health detracted from their academic performance.[3]

The link between screen use and mental, physical, and emotional problems is clear.[4]

A Stanford University Study revealed that during an average week of classes, screen use comprised 50.2% of a student's waking hours (77.6% during the pandemic)![5]

Every day, lower-income kids spend 1.4 more hours on screens than affluent peers.[6]

① Tips for less screen time at school

- Take class notes by hand if possible and look for physical copies of required readings.

- Mute email notifications on your phone.

- If you struggle with scrolling but don't want to delete IG, try moving it to your laptop!

② Taking care of your mental health

- Don't just remove screens: **replace them**. Pick up a hobby, plan a hike, or read a good book.

- Before posting online, ask yourself **why**. *Is this coming from a place of insecurity? Do my feelings rely on how much attention I receive online?*

- Adequate rest is an important part of wellness, and screens make it harder to sleep. Try to stop scrolling an hour before bed.

③ Taking care of your social heath

- At meals or hangouts with friends, try keeping phones in bags...out of sight, out of mind!

- If you can, call instead of text to catch up.

- Remember that conflicts are often best handled in person. Tone is difficult to guess online.

④ Taking care of your physical health

- Go outside, starting with 15 minutes a day. Eat a meal outdoors or read a book in the sun!

- Get moving! There are plenty of gentle exercises that combat text-neck or stiff wrists from typing.

- Mindful breathing helps combat anxiety.

Tips for Students: Screen Time Self Care

What Universities Can Do

- Promote Screen-Free Week! Maybe celebrate the week after spring finals?

- **Distribute digital detox resources and factsheets to students (like this one).**

- Form a student advisory board to discuss issues of tech wellness.

- **Prioritize the use of books or physical materials when they work for students.**

- Ensure school tech does not use harmful design practices to monopolize attention.

- Reduce email clutter and unnecessary notifications in school communications.

- **Post important announcements in physical places, not just online.**

- Increase access to mental health services, providing professionals in digital wellbeing.

- **Host classes in person or outside when deemed safe by public health officials.**

- Recognize that tech access is not universal; more tech is not the answer.

HELP US MAKE DIGITAL HEALTH A PRIORITY.

Find more resources at:

www.screenfree.org

www.fairplayforkids.org

Take the Screen-Free Week **pledge**!

screen-free week

Sources:
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