



Apply before Scrolling

The 3M's of Digital Nutrition

We have a love/hate relationship with our devices and online activities which are complex and multifaceted. 'Screen time' isn't just one thing. It's a gazillion different things depending on the device you're using and the content you're consuming on various the platforms you log into (and freely hand out our data and feed our keystrokes to!).

While time spent online is an important measure - time is a non-renewable resource and you can only spend it once - there are other factors that you can consider. They will help shift your screen-based media use more into a positive and purposeful gear.

Here are my 3Ms of Digital Nutrition - apply them before you or your children choose to engage in online spaces.

Mindful

Being mindful in relation to your digital habits means directing your attention so that you are present to your actions, that you have moment-to-moment awareness of, and responsibility over your activities online.

Mindfulness keeps you away from time-wasting 'digital rabbit-holes'. It helps you to avoid going online to numb out or ignore your feelings, or to cope with the discomfort of some parts of everyday life. Developing healthier coping skills than scrolling and streaming is important for you and your child.

Being mindful means pausing, and thinking more broadly about how what you do, say, click on and scroll through impacts your overall health and wellbeing (one swipe at a time). When you zoom out and think about how your use (and your kids' use) of devices snowballs over weeks, months, and years, it can help you be more attentive and present.

Questions to ask yourself:

- ▶ How do I feel in my mind and body before I go online?
- ▶ What am I truly seeking when I go online and will I find it there?
- ▶ How does being online change my feelings or physical sensations?
- ▶ How can I get better at 'reading' and 'listening' to these cues?
- ▶ How can I remain focused and present while online?
- ▶ How can I notice when I am risk of overloading my senses and need to step back from the screen?+

Meaningful

As humans we often search for meaning and enjoy having things in our life of significance and interest to us. When there is so much content available online, from video games to conquer and TV series to stream across multiples

services, to influencers and personalities to follow on social media, its valuable to check in with how these activities align to the things you care about.

Algorithms are designed to work hard to capture your attention. It's easy (especially when you are not mindful) to slip into being distracted by digital fairy floss that doesn't help advance you towards what you value.

Recently I stepped back and re-evaluated who deserves my attention. This included removing two(!) accounts of guys mowing lawns that I had become fascinated by. Given I don't plan on a career in grass maintenance, it was time to unfollow them!

When you have clarity with your values (and live aligned to them) you have a greater sense of purpose. This contributes to you being the person you want to be (both online and IRL, in real life).

Questions to reflect on:

- ▶ How is what I am viewing/reading/playing relevant to or aligned to my goals?
- ▶ How does this action/activity contribute in a positive way to my life and overall sense of wellbeing and satisfaction?
- ▶ Have I made time to clarify my values and think about what I care about and what gives me purpose?
- ▶ Am I following people, celebrities and influencers that contribute meaningfully to my life?
- ▶ How might I curate the accounts I follow so they align more to the stuff I care about?
- ▶ What deserves my attention?

Moderate

We all only have 24 hours in a day, so how you choose to spend our time is something that you can control and develop discipline around (especially when you have switched on your mindful awareness and are clear on what is meaningful to you!).

Moderating yourself online doesn't just meaning keeping an eye on the clock and being able to regulate your usage. It's your ability to show restraint when engaging with other people (often from behind a screen or keyboard) in digital spaces. Being able to moderate what you (or your children) say and how you react in situations matters.

Questions to reflect on:

- ▶ How can I tell if I am over-reacting to a situation online?
- ▶ What would happen if I did not respond to that tweet/comment/post/message or 'slept on it' before replying?
- ▶ What strategies or digital hacks can I use to moderate my time online and ensure I don't overdo it?
- ▶ How can I notice and listen to body and mind signals about when it's time to logoff/take a break?

You might notice that these three principles all connect and inter-relate. Teach your kids to switch onto these ways of being online – and try it yourself. I predict the quality of your use of technology and online habits will improve!



AUTHOR

Jocelyn Brewer

Jocelyn Brewer is a Sydney-based registered psychologist who has been helping humans manage their relationship with technology for over a decade. She is the founder of Digital Nutrition – a positive, proactive technology-use philosophy that helps empower people to use the technology in their skulls to manage the devices in their homes and pockets! Instagram is the social media app she would take to a desert island if she could only have one.

