



TECHNOLOGY, AND HOW TO MODERATE ITS USE DURING QUARANTINE

After nine days of isolation, I have tried to create routines by maintaining the time of rest, exercising, and planning my meals. However, I would not be entirely honest if I did not admit that, more than ever, I find myself saturated with the use of technological devices.

Living in Madrid, the Maps app has been our greatest ally, but the current situation has given way to the use of many others.

While we continue to rely on technology for the virtual interactions we already had, we now depend on it for those conversations that we used to have in person, as well. We need technology not only to prepare for classes but also to present our work. Further, we invest time in our health through fitness and healthy eating apps, not to mention all the constant exchange of news about the current situation.

On the one hand, I feel lucky for the period of history that we are living in, with digital tools that allow us to continue working, have virtual coffees with friends and family, learn, and have access to resources on self-care. All of this, while keeping us entertained during the quarantine. On the other hand, it is also interesting to realize its excessive use because of the reasons mentioned earlier.

As evidenced by studies such as that of researcher Adrian Ward, professor at the McCombs School of Business of the University of Texas, merely having a smartphone nearby **can reduce our cognitive capacity** due to its mere

presence acting as an attention distractor and its ability to affect our neural function.

We also know that the excessive use of technology, especially the use of light-emitting screens at a short distance, affect **our rest and the quality of our sleep.**

Another main reason we must cultivate awareness and responsible consumption of technological resources is the excessive **"need" or "obsession"** that they can produce.

In the classes that I teach about wellness and new technologies, we talk about the advantages of tools such as big data, artificial intelligence, or virtual reality for our health and personal development (I confess to being a great fan and user of these apps and tools). However, we also see numerous studies that emphasize the high prevalence of obsessive behaviors due to **having the material always available at hand, the need for constant self-evaluation, and social comparison.**

In addition to the danger of developing an obsession, for some, the interference that technology poses in our ability to pay attention, remember, understand, or rest does not represent a strong enough reason to limit the use of consumer technology. Still, we must also think about **the amount of time that we are not dedicating to other things in our lives.**

As I mentioned earlier, we are fortunate to have all these tools at our fingertips, but we must limit their use to make room to rest, spend time with ourselves, meditate, cook, or read mindfully. Here are some tips on how to do it:

1. PRIORITIZE. TECHNOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF YOUR VALUES

Apart from your working or study hours (in case you are working from home), let us think about what you want to use the technology for and which type of tool you will use. That is, we need to **put these tools at the service of your priorities, not the other way around**. If your priorities include connecting with your family, exercising, or learning, try limiting the use of digital devices to these areas.

2. STIMULI CONTROL AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Why not make your life easier? The same way you do not keep sweets at home to avoid temptation, implement specific times of no phone use if you want to limit the use of technology. For example: not sleeping with the phone at your bedside or not using your smartphone until you have completed your routine of exercise, shower, and mindful breakfast every morning. Other ideas may be not recurring to technology while we are having a meal or reading a book, or even disabling all notifications on your phone. In this way, **you will decide when you want to access a phone app and not the other way around**.

3. PLAN ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

Brainstorm activities that can be done without the use of technology at home. In my case, during the short walks that I take with my dog, I never take my smartphone with me. You can also write a recipe by hand and concentrate on cooking it, or you could get creative with any kind of hand-made art.

Digital tools are wonderful resources that we have at our fingertips, but they also generate addiction and make us waste a lot of time on social media and reading the same type of news.

Soon, we will return to our regular lifestyles, and we must be prepared for it. Think about what you want to take away from this experience. How do you want to transition out of this quarantine period? **Try to use technological resources only to reinforce what you want to achieve; and, at the same time, let us build a healthier relationship with them.**



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