A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
INDIAN FAMILIES & YOUNG ADULTS

Scroll Free

Reclaiming Your Attention in the Reel Age

Take Your Time Back, One Small Change at a Time.



A Parent–Teen–Student Guide to a Healthier, Happier Digital Life

Digital Wellbeing

Parents & Teens

7-Day Detox

Focus & Productivity

Mr. Jag

First Edition | 2026

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This book offers general wellbeing ideas. It is not medical advice. If you or someone in your family is struggling with sleep, mood, eating or self-harm, please speak to a qualified doctor or counsellor.

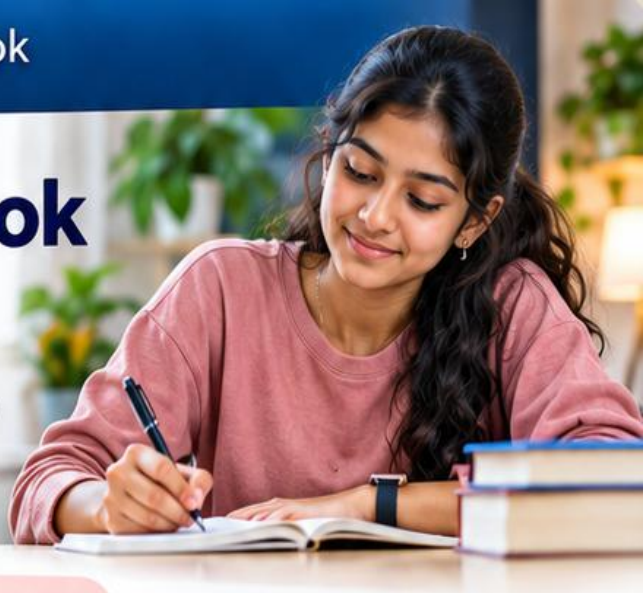
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Inside This Book

Click a chapter to go there.

How to Use This Book	4
00 Introduction: Thumb Fatigue	5
By the Numbers	7
01 How the Reel Machine Works	9
02 Anatomy of Reel Fatigue	15
03 The Comparison Trap	21
04 Sleep and the Phone Bedtime	27
05 Children and Teens on Reels	33
06 Studies, Work and Focus	41
07 Money, Time and Hidden Costs	47
08 Relationships in the Scroll Era	53
09 Your 7-Day Digital Detox	60
10 Building a Healthy Digital Life	66
11 Mental Health, Anxiety and Loneliness	72
12 Creators, Performance Pressure and Earning Online	79
13 Cyberbullying, Privacy and Digital Safety	85
14 Misinformation, Outrage and Polarisation	91
15 Eyes, Posture and Body Health	97
Conclusion: Back to the Real Feed	104
Appendix: Trackers, Glossary and Help	105
Sources and References	109

How to Use This Book



Most books about screens tell you to stop. This one asks you to notice, reflect and try practical changes. Read a chapter, try one exercise and see what changes before you read the next.

Each chapter follows the same pattern:

Summary box	The core idea in three or four lines.
Everyday example	A short story to help the idea feel familiar.
What people reported	Results from published studies in which real people tried the same idea.
Reflection page	Space to write your own answers and one change for the week.
Try this	Three simple steps you can finish in one sitting.

Three ground rules

1. **Small changes beat big promises.** Remove one app from your home screen before you try to delete all of them.
2. **Shame does not help.** If you slip, note it and carry on. The goal is a steadier pattern, not perfection.
3. **Share the work.** Where a chapter mentions children or partners, try the idea together rather than enforcing it alone.

00 Thumb Fatigue



Your thumb often scrolls almost automatically—one video, then another, and another. It feels easy and effortless, but over time it quietly pulls your attention away from what really matters.

This habit, known as “thumb fatigue,” happens when constant scrolling keeps your mind busy, reduces your focus, and makes time slip by without you even noticing.

At a Glance: What Is Thumb Fatigue?

- Tired feelings
- Less focus
- Time moves fast
- Constant checking
- Drained energy

Key Takeaway

You are not alone. It is a common result of automatic scrolling, and you can take simple steps to get your attention and time back.

INDIA IN 2026

1.04 bn
Internet users

573 mn
Social-media identities

98 min
Social use, reported

Why this matters now

Social media is part of daily life for a large share of Indians. India has about 1.04 billion internet users and 573 million social media user identities, according to DataReportal's Digital 2026 India report. A 2026 report by VTION and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) put average social media use at about 98 minutes a day, and above 120 minutes for young urban users aged 18 to 24. Habits vary widely, but these figures help explain why so many people feel they have lost control of their attention.

The problem is not only the amount of time. It is the kind of time. Short, rapid clips are built to deliver the next surprise before you have finished the last one. Over weeks, that rhythm can shape how long you can stay with a book, a conversation, or a difficult task.

98 min

120+ min

573 mn

average daily social media	daily use among young	social media user identities
use in India (VTION and	urban Indians aged 18 to 24	in India, about 34% of the
IAMAI, 2026)	(same report)	population (DataReportal, 2026)

Summary

Reel fatigue is a mismatch between what your feed is built to do and what you need your attention for. You can change that mismatch without giving up your phone.

Data note: DataReportal cautions that social-media identities are not unique individuals and that revised source methods limit direct year-to-year comparisons.

By the Numbers

Social media is part of daily life for a large share of Indians. Here are the latest picture and what it means for our time, focus and wellbeing.

1.08 billion
Internet users in India
(DataReportal, 2026)

573 million
Social media user identities in India
(DataReportal, 2027)

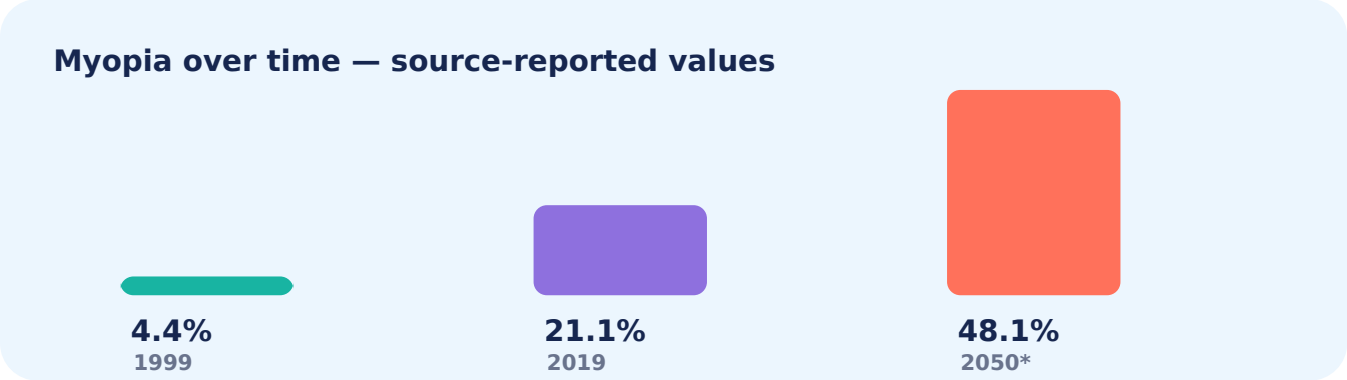
≈ 98 minutes
Average daily social media use by urban Indians
(IAMAI, 2026)



What this means

- We are more connected than ever.
- Many of us spend ~1.5 hours daily on social media.
- That time can add up to 500+ hours a year!

CHILDREN’S EYESIGHT



*2050 is a projection, not an observed measurement.

One trend to watch: children's eyesight

Short-sightedness (myopia) among urban Indian children aged 5 to 15 rose almost five-fold in twenty years. If the trend continues in a straight line, researchers project that nearly half of urban children could be short-sighted by 2050.

48.1% (projected)

21.1% (measured)

4.4%

Share of urban Indian children aged 5 to 15 with myopia. Solid line: measured; dashed line: projection assuming the same yearly rise. Source: Priscilla and Verkicharla, Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics,

2021.

Screens are not the only cause. Less time outdoors and long hours of close-up work also matter. Chapter 15 shows what a large school trial found when children simply spent more time outside.

of countries had a national ban on phones in schools by March

2026, up from 24% in June 2023.

Source: UNESCO Global Education Monitoring team, reported by The Hitavada, March 2026



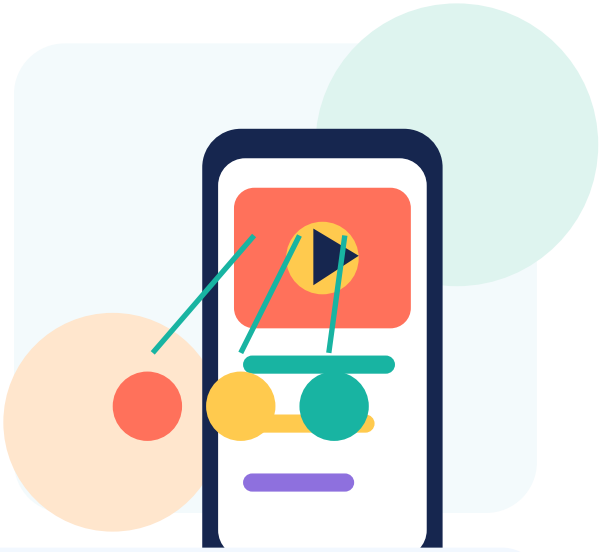
WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Before you can change a habit, it helps to understand what is shaping it. Short-video feeds draw on a few well-known design patterns, and seeing them clearly makes them easier to resist.

Infinite feed · Uncertain reward · Autoplay · Return

CHAPTER 01

The infinite feed



ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER

1 Infinite feed → 2 Uncertain reward → 3 Autoplay → 4 Return

A feed that never ends removes the natural stopping points that books and TV episodes once provided. There is no last page and no closing credits. When the next clip starts automatically, the decision to stop becomes a decision you must make again every few seconds.

Variable rewards

Some clips are dull, some are funny, and a few are startling. Because you cannot predict which one comes next, each swipe carries a small chance of a reward. This unpredictability is the same mechanism that keeps people checking slot machines, and it helps explain why a feed can feel compelling even when most of it is forgettable.

Autoplay and notifications

Autoplay removes the pause in which you might choose to leave. Notifications bring you back from the other side, telling you that someone has replied, liked, or mentioned you. Each alert is a small invitation, and invitations are hard to ignore when they arrive dozens of times a day.

Summary

Infinite scroll, unpredictable rewards, autoplay, and notifications work together. Knowing which one is pulling you makes it easier to respond.

Everyday example

Anjali, a school teacher in Pune, opened her phone at 9 pm to check one message. Forty minutes later she had watched cooking clips, a travel vlog, and two dance videos. She had not chosen any of them. She had simply kept swiping, because the next one was always just a thumb away.

EDITORIAL CLARIFICATION: Recommendation systems vary across platforms. These are possible signals, not guaranteed app responses.

Why short videos feel so satisfying

Short clips resolve quickly. A joke lands in eight seconds, a recipe finishes in thirty, a problem is solved before you have time to feel bored. Each small ending gives a tiny sense of completion, and the next clip offers another one immediately.

The feed also learns from you. It does not need you to press a button to know what you like. It reads how long you watch, whether you rewatch, when you pause and what you skip, and it uses those signals to choose the next clip.

What you do	What the app may infer
Watch a clip to the end	May recommend similar clips
Rewatch or pause	May signal interest
Share or save	This is worth pushing to others too
Swipe away in one second	Show less of this
Open the app at the same time daily	This is a reliable moment to reach you

Try this

1. Turn off all non-essential notifications for one day. Keep calls and messages from family. 2. Set your phone to grayscale for an evening. Notice which apps feel less pulling. 3. Write down the moment you open a short-video app today, and what you were doing just before.

Taking back the controls

You cannot redesign the app, but you can add friction between yourself and the feed. Friction is any small step that makes the automatic choice a little slower. Even a few seconds of delay gives your thinking mind a chance to catch up with your thumb.

The aim is not to make the phone useless. It is to make the habits you want easy and the habits you do not want slightly harder.

Friction step	How it helps
Move short-video apps off the home screen	Removes the reflex tap
Log out after each use	Adds a pause before the next session
Use the browser version instead of the app	Fewer autoplay and notification hooks
Tap "not interested" on clips you regret	Teaches the feed what to stop
watching	showing
Set a daily app limit	Gives a clear signal that time is up

Everyday example

Farhan, a college student in Lucknow, moved his video apps into a folder on the last screen of his phone and logged out every night. He still used them, but he said the extra steps made him ask whether he really wanted to open them.

What people reported

Grayscale cut phone use by about 39 minutes a day. In research led by psychologist Holte at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash, about 220 university students switched their phone screens to grayscale. Their daily smartphone use fell by an average of 39 minutes.

Source: University of Cincinnati news, 2022

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 01 • How the Reel Machine Works

01 Which design feature (endless feed, autoplay, notifications) pulls you in most?

02 When do you usually open a short-video app without deciding to?

03 Which friction step will you try first?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Reel fatigue is not one symptom. It is a set of small, connected signs: tired eyes, a scattered mind, and a flat mood that appears after long sessions. Naming them makes them easier to spot early.

Tired eyes · Interrupted focus · Low energy · Pause

CHAPTER 02

The signs you might notice

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 **Tired eyes** → 2 **Interrupted focus** → 3 **Low energy** → 4 **Pause**

Area	Common sign	A simple first step
Eyes	Dryness, headaches, blurred vision after a session	Blink deliberately; look at something 6 m away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes
Focus	Reaching for the phone during reading or work	Keep the phone in another room for one focused hour
Mood	Feeling flat or irritable after scrolling	Note your mood before and after one session this week
Body	Stiff neck, sore thumbs, poor posture	Hold the phone at eye level, not bent toward your chest
Time	"Just five minutes" becomes an hour	Set a timer before you open an app

Summary

The earliest signs are usually physical or attention-based. Catching them early keeps the habit from settling into a pattern that feels normal.

EDITORIAL CLARIFICATION: A conceptual illustration is not measured evidence. The original attention-curve graphic has been replaced with a practical reflection prompt.

The "numb after forty minutes" feeling

Many people describe a particular moment: after a long session, the screen still moves but nothing lands. The scroll continues because stopping feels like effort, not because the content is worth watching.

This flatness is often a sign that your attention is being used up faster than it is being refilled. Brief clips demand quick decisions. Without rest, the mind starts to skim everything, including the things you care about.

Everyday example

Rahul, a software tester in Bengaluru, noticed that after his evening scroll he could no longer follow a film. He began stopping after 25 minutes and reading a paper book instead. Within two weeks, he said the films felt enjoyable again.

Try this

1. Pick a session length you can keep to, such as 20 or 25 minutes. 2. Stand up and move for two minutes when the timer goes off. 3. Rate your focus from 1 to 5 before and after. Compare after a week.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Attention residue and task switching

When you switch from a task to your phone and back again, part of your mind stays with the phone. Researchers call this attention residue. The message you glanced at, the clip you half-watched or the comment you plan to reply to keeps pulling at your thinking.

A few checks may not feel like much. Spread across a day, they can break work and study into short, shallow pieces. The table shows how quickly small checks add up.

Moment in the day	Typical check	What it interrupts
Waking up	Notifications and messages	A calm start
Commute	Reels and group chats	Rest or thinking time
Mid-task	"Just one look"	Deep focus
Meals	Scrolling while eating	Conversation and taste
Bedtime	One last feed	Wind-down and sleep

Summary

Each check carries a cost beyond the seconds it takes. Grouping checks together protects the time in between.

What people reported

Turning alerts off made people less distracted. In a University of British Columbia study, 221 students spent one week with phone notifications on and one week with them off and the phone out of reach. They reported significantly more inattention and hyperactivity during the alerts-on week.

Source: Kushlev, Proulx and Dunn, ACM CHI Conference, 2016

Mood after the scroll

Not all screen time feels the same. Messaging a friend, learning a skill or planning a trip is active use: you are doing something with intention. Endless passive scrolling, where clips simply arrive, is more often linked with feeling flat, restless or low afterward.

A useful test is to ask how you feel ten minutes after closing the app. If you feel informed, connected or rested, the time was probably well spent. If you feel drained or irritable, it may be time to change what you watch or how long you stay.

Active use	Passive use
Video call with family	Autoplay clips with no plan
Learning a recipe and cooking it	Watching recipes you will never cook
Messaging a friend directly	Scrolling other people's updates
Searching for something specific	Opening the app with no reason

Try this

1. After each session today, rate your mood from 1 to 5. 2. Swap one passive session for an active one, such as a call or a tutorial you follow. 3. Compare your ratings at the end of the week.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 02 • Anatomy of Reel Fatigue

01 Which sign of reel fatigue have you noticed in yourself this week?

02 How do you usually feel ten minutes after a long scroll?

03 What will you do instead when you notice the 'numb' feeling?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

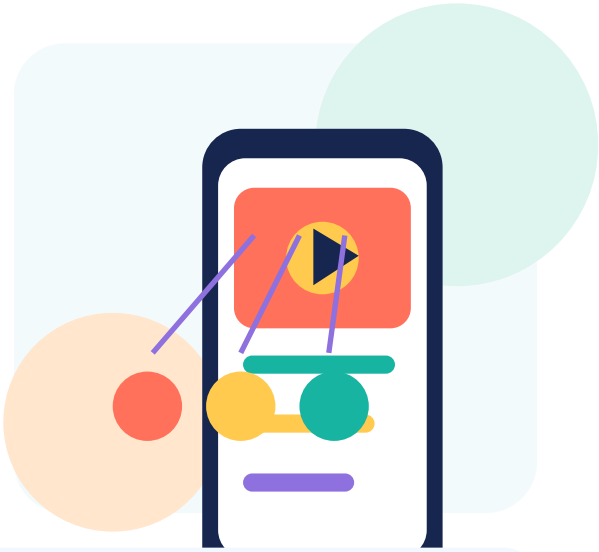
Feeds show highlights. Everyone else appears to be travelling, celebrating, earning, or looking effortlessly well. The gap between their best moments and your ordinary Tuesday can feel like a

Polished post · Unseen effort · Everyday truth · Perspective

CHAPTER 03

Curated lives, filtered faces

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Polished post → 2 Unseen effort → 3 Everyday truth → 4 Perspective

A post is the best 3 seconds from a day that may have been ordinary. Filters, lighting, careful cropping, and editing can change how a person looks. Viewers rarely see the forty attempts before the one that was shared.

Comparison is not new. Families have always compared houses, weddings, and exam results. What is new is the speed, the volume, and the fact that the comparison arrives in your pocket, all day, from people you may not know at all.

Where comparison hurts most

Research and commentary often point to appearance, body image, relationships, and career progress as the most sensitive areas. The effect is strongest when you are already uncertain about yourself. A healthy-looking feed can quietly make a healthy person feel behind.

Summary

Feeds show edited highlights. Remembering that the comparison is unfair, rather than a measure of your worth, is the first step out.

Everyday example

Priya, a graphic designer in Chennai, felt uneasy every time a classmate posted a trip abroad. After she started following accounts that shared work in progress, messy desks, and failed sketches, her feed felt more honest and she felt less pressure to keep up.

Try this

1. Unfollow or mute three accounts that leave you feeling worse, for two weeks. 2. Follow two accounts that share skills you want to learn, not only lifestyles. 3. Each night, write one ordinary thing you did well. Keep it short.

Filters, beauty and skin-tone pressure

Many apps offer filters that smooth skin, slim faces, enlarge eyes and lighten complexion with one tap. Used for fun, they can be harmless. Used every day, they can change what people think a normal face looks like, including their own.

In India, pressure around fair skin has a long history, and some filters quietly repeat it. Boys and young men face their own pressure too, from gym physiques and "perfect" grooming. Talking openly about these standards helps young people see them as choices made by others, not facts about beauty.

Everyday example

Sana, a Class 10 student in Bhopal, noticed she no longer liked photos of herself without a filter. Her art teacher asked the class to draw unfiltered self- portraits and talk about what they liked in each other's faces. Sana said it was the first time in months she had looked at her own face kindly.

Try this

1. Post or share one unfiltered photo with close friends or family. 2. Notice which accounts make you want to change your appearance, and mute two of them. 3. Talk with a young person in your family about how filters work.

What people reported

Changing the feed changed how people felt. In an experiment by Australian researchers, 195 young women aged 18 to 30 viewed different Instagram posts. Those shown body-positive posts reported better mood, higher body satisfaction and greater body appreciation than those shown thin-ideal or neutral posts.

Source: Cohen, Fardouly, Newton-John and Slater, New Media and Society, 2019

Milestones and the "by thirty" clock

Feeds are full of milestones: weddings, new jobs, first cars, new homes, foreign trips. Each post is a real happy moment, but together they create an invisible timetable that says where you should be by a certain age.

Most posts show the result and hide the path. A new home may come with a large loan, a new job with long hours, a foreign trip with months of saving. Remembering the hidden side keeps comparison in proportion.

What the post shows	What it usually leaves out
Keys to a new flat	Years of saving, EMIs and paperwork
A promotion announcement	Late nights, stress and failed attempts
A perfect wedding album	Cost, family tension and planning stress
A holiday abroad	Budgeting, visas and ordinary days at work

Summary

Everyone's timetable is different. Comparing your full life with someone else's highlights will always feel unfair.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 03 • The Comparison Trap

01 Which accounts most often make you feel behind?

02 What is one thing in your ordinary life that you are quietly proud of?

03 Who could you talk to about comparison and pressure?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Many people say they use their phone in bed to relax. Yet the same habit often delays sleep, shortens it, and leaves the next morning heavy. The bedroom has become the place where the reel machine

Slow down · Phone away · Read or rest · Sleep

CHAPTER 04

Why the last hour matters

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER





Late-evening screen use tends to combine three things: bright light, stimulating content, and the interruption of a plan to sleep. Each one can push back the time at which you feel ready for bed.

Your sleep is also shaped by habit. If your phone is the last thing you see before sleep and the first thing you reach for on waking, the cycle is hard to break without changing where the phone lives.

A simple wind-down routine

Time before bed	What to do
60 minutes	Dim the lights and switch on night mode, if you use it
45 minutes	Stop watching short clips. Read or listen to something calm instead
30 minutes	Put the phone to charge outside the bedroom
15 minutes	Write tomorrow's top three tasks on paper
On waking	Look at the clock, not the feed. Drink water first

Summary

The phone's location matters more than its brightness. Charging it outside the bedroom is one of the most effective changes you can make.

Night scrolling without guilt

Night scrolling often starts as a small break and becomes a reward for a long day. The aim is not to shame yourself out of it. Instead, try to make the alternative easier than the feed.

Everyday example

Suresh, a shop owner in Jaipur, kept his phone on the kitchen counter overnight. He bought a cheap alarm clock and found that his sleep was steadier within a fortnight. He kept the phone for emergencies and calls.

Try this

1. Move your charger out of reach of your bed for one week. 2. Replace the phone alarm with a separate clock. 3. Keep a notebook by the bed for thoughts that arrive at night, so they do not turn into scrolling.

What people reported

No phone for 30 minutes before bed improved sleep. In a four-week randomised pilot trial, 19 adults avoided their phones for the last 30 minutes before bed while 19 others carried on as usual. The no-phone group fell asleep faster, slept longer, rated their sleep better and showed better mood and working memory.

Source: He and colleagues, PLOS ONE, 2020

EDITORIAL CLARIFICATION: For age five, check the applicable age-specific sleep recommendation; the older summary omitted this age.

How much sleep do we need?

Sleep needs change with age. Children and teenagers need more sleep than adults because their bodies and brains are still developing. Late-night phone use often cuts into exactly the hours they need most.

The table gives sleep ranges from the World Health Organization (ages 1 to 4) and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (ages 6 and over). Individual needs vary, so treat these as a guide.

Age group	Recommended sleep in 24 hours
Children 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours, including naps
Children 3 to 4 years	10 to 13 hours, including naps
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours
Adults 18 to 60 years	7 hours or more

If your phone use regularly pushes your sleep below these ranges, the sleep loss is likely to show up in mood, focus and health before you notice it in your screen time.

Summary

Protecting sleep is one of the most valuable reasons to change evening phone habits.

of Indians in a survey of more than 43,000 people across 348 districts said they get less than six hours of uninterrupted sleep a

59%

day.

Source: LocalCircles survey, reported by ThePrint, March 2025

Exam season and late nights

During exams, many students study late and then reach for the phone as a reward. A short break turns into a long scroll, and sleep is cut short just when memory needs it most. Sleep helps the brain store what was learned during the day.

Parents can help by agreeing on a study-and-sleep plan before exam season starts, not during a stressful week.

Time	Exam-season plan
Evening study	Phone in another room; 25 to 50 minute focus blocks
Break	Walk, stretch or a snack. No reels
One hour before bed	Light revision from notes, not screens
Bedtime	Phone charging outside the room
Morning	Quick revision before checking messages

Everyday example

Before her board exams in Nagpur, Ishita and her parents agreed that all phones in the house would charge in the kitchen from 10 pm. She later said the rule felt strict at first but helped her wake up without feeling foggy.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 04 • Sleep and the Phone Bedtime

01 What time do you usually put your phone down at night?

02 Where will your phone charge from tonight?

03 How does a good night's sleep change your next day?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Young people are often the most active users of short-video apps and the most exposed to their pressures. Parents want to protect them without losing their trust. The aim here is to find a middle path: clear family rules, open conversations, and shared screen time.

Listen · Agree · Make rules · Review

CHAPTER 05

Set rules together

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Listen → 2 Agree → 3 Make rules → 4 Review

Rules imposed without explanation often lead to secret accounts and hidden phones. Rules made together are easier to keep. Sit down with your child or teen and agree on a small number of points. Write them down and review them once a month.

A family phone agreement you can adapt

Phones stay out of bedrooms overnight. No phones at the dining table during meals. Screen time for short-video apps is set together, with a weekly review. If something online makes you feel unsafe or upset, you can tell a parent without losing your phone.

Summary

Rules work best when they are explained, agreed, and reviewed. Keep the conversation open, even when the answer is no.

Everyday example

A Hyderabad family set a Sunday evening "phone basket" for the whole household. The first week was tense. By the third week, the teenager was suggesting which films the family could watch together instead.

of 282 children aged 2 to 4 in rural Haryana had more than the WHO limit of one hour of screen time a day, in a study by AIIMS

50.5%

Delhi researchers.

Source: Outlook India report on the AIIMS study

Co-viewing instead of policing

Watching a few clips together can teach more than a lecture. Ask what the creator is trying to achieve, who they are speaking to, and how the video was made. These questions help young people think about what they are seeing.

Children also benefit from seeing adults put their own phones down. Modelling the habit you want to teach is more persuasive than any rule.

Try this

1. Watch one short video each week with your child and ask two questions about it. 2. Agree on one shared offline activity each week, such as a walk or a board game. 3. Ask your child to show you one account they enjoy and explain why.

What people reported

Two weeks of less screen time helped children. In a Danish trial, 89 families with 181 children cut leisure screen time to under three hours a week for two weeks and handed in their phones and tablets. Compared with families who carried on as usual, parents reported fewer emotional and behavioural difficulties and more kind, helpful behaviour in their children.

Source: SCREENS trial, JAMA Network Open, 2024

EDITORIAL CLARIFICATION: IAP age boundaries have been retained from the cited guideline. The age-10 boundary should be interpreted with the original recommendations.

Screen-time guidance by age

The Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) issued screen-time guidelines in 2022, and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued guidance for under-fives in 2019. Both point the same way: the younger the child, the less screen time, and screens should never replace sleep, play, reading or time with caregivers.

Age

What the guidelines say

Under 2

No screen exposure of any kind (IAP). WHO: no screen time before age 1, and

years

not recommended at age 1

2 to 5

At most 1 hour a day, in sessions of 20 to 30 minutes, watched with an adult

years

(IAP). WHO: up to 1 hour a day for ages 2 to 4; less is better

5 to 10

Under 2 hours a day in total, including screens used for homework (IAP)

years

10 to 18

No fixed limit; balance screens with at least 1 hour of outdoor activity and 8 to

years

9 hours of sleep (IAP)

For older children, the content and the context matter as much as the minutes. A family video call, a coding tutorial and an hour of autoplay clips are very different experiences.

Summary

Limits work best when they are age-appropriate, consistent and agreed in advance.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Warning signs and when to seek help

Most children who love their phones do not have a serious problem. Some patterns, though, suggest that screen use is starting to harm daily life and deserves closer attention.

Warning sign	What it might look like
Strong irritability	Anger or tears when the device is taken away
Loss of interest	Dropping hobbies, sports or friends
Sleep problems	Late nights, tiredness at school
Falling marks	Homework skipped or rushed
Secrecy	Hidden accounts, deleted history, lying about use

If several signs appear together for weeks, talk to the school counsellor or a paediatrician. In Bengaluru, the SHUT clinic (Service for Healthy Use of Technology) at NIMHANS specialises in technology overuse. In a survey of 424 parents who sought its help, nearly half described a loss of control, such as irritability when devices were taken away.

Try this

1. Note which of these signs, if any, you have seen in the past month.

2. Talk calmly with your child about what you have noticed. 3. Seek professional advice if the pattern continues.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 05 • Children and Teens on Reels

01 Which family phone rule matters most to you?

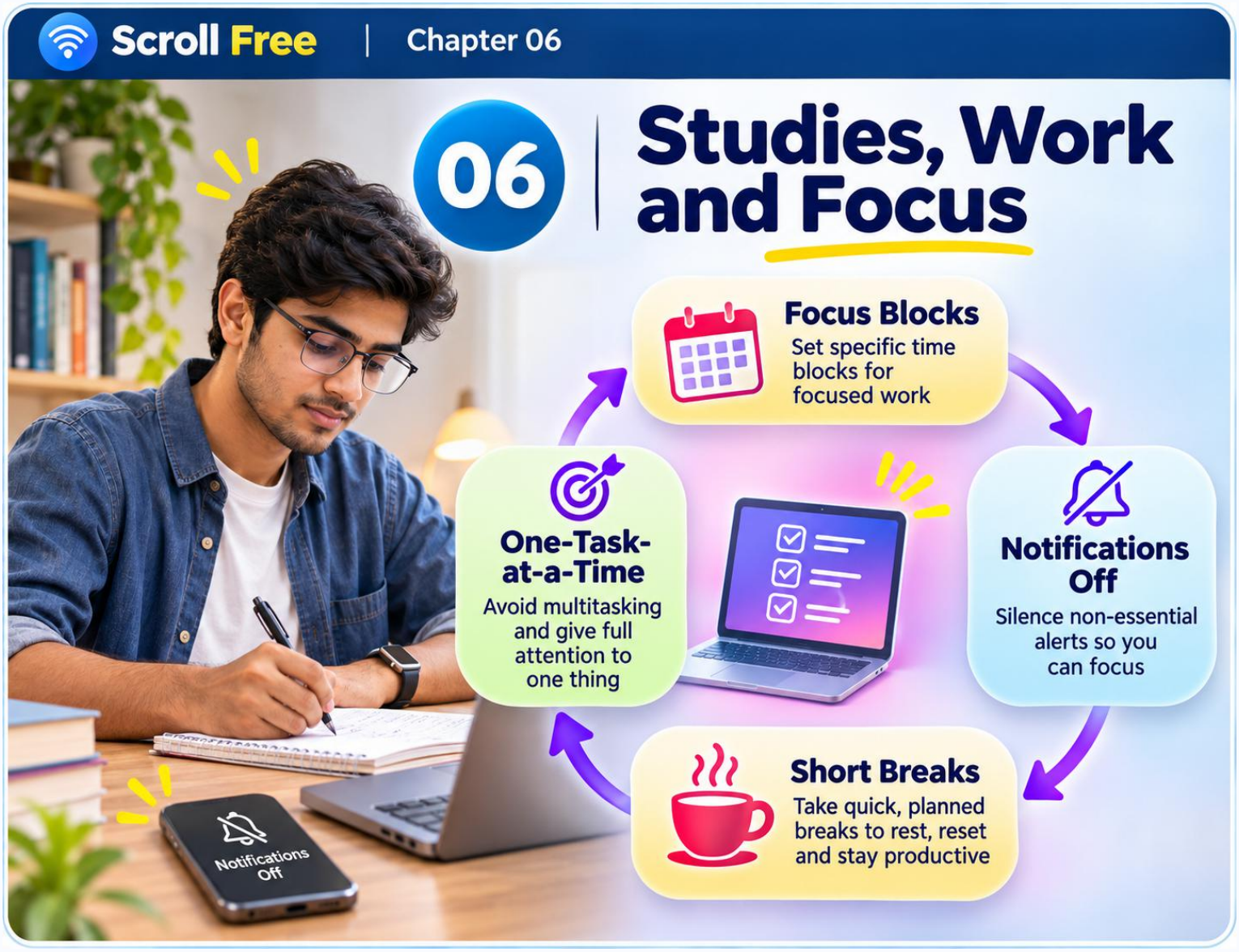
02 What does your child enjoy most online, in their own words?

03 Which offline activity can you share each week?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Students and professionals often describe their attention as fragmented. Deep work, meaning focused effort on a single task, becomes harder when a small break is always available. Protecting focus is a skill, and like any skill it improves with practice.

One task · Phone away · Focus · Rest

CHAPTER 06

The "just one more" habit



ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



Opening a feed to check one thing is the most common way attention leaks. The check becomes a loop, and the loop returns you to your task with less energy and a scattered mind.

The focus block

A focus block is a planned period, usually 25 to 50 minutes, during which you work on one task with your phone out of reach. After the block, take a short break and decide what comes next.

Block	Length	Rule
Study	25 minutes	Phone in another room; only textbook or notes open
Work	50 minutes	Notifications off; one task on screen
Break	5 minutes	Stand, stretch, drink water. No feed

Summary

Plan your focus, protect it with distance, and treat breaks as breaks rather than new feeds.

Everyday example

Meera, preparing for a competitive exam in Kolkata, kept her phone in her bag during study blocks. She recorded how many blocks she finished each day. Her count rose steadily, and she reported fewer last-minute panics before mock tests.

Reclaiming attention for the long task

Long, meaningful tasks, such as reading a chapter, writing a report, or learning a skill, reward patience. Short-video habits can train you to expect quick rewards. Gradually lengthening your focus blocks retrains that expectation.

Try this

1. Start with one 25-minute block tomorrow. Add five minutes each day until you reach 50. 2. Choose one long task you have been avoiding and give it one block. 3. At the end of the week, note which tasks felt easier with focus blocks.

Phones in the classroom and at the desk

A phone does not need to ring to distract. Even when it is silent and face-down, part of the mind stays alert to it. Keeping it out of sight, ideally in another room, frees more attention for the task in front of you.

Schools worldwide are moving the same way. UNESCO counted national school phone bans in 58% of countries by March 2026, up from 24% in 2023. At home, students can create the same effect with a simple study-desk setup.

Study desk setup	Why it helps
Phone in another room or a bag	Removes the silent pull
Only the books for one subject on the desk	One task at a time
A paper list of doubts to ask later	Stops searching mid-study
A clock instead of the phone for time	No reason to unlock the screen
Water and a snack nearby	Fewer reasons to get up and drift

Summary

Out of sight is better than silent. Design your desk so that focus is the easiest choice.

What people reported

Test scores rose after schools banned phones. Economists Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy studied schools in England that banned phones. Test scores of 16-year-olds rose by 6.4% of a standard deviation, roughly equal to five extra days of schooling, and gains for the lowest-achieving students were twice the average.

Source: Beland and Murphy, London School of Economics, reported by Education World, 2015

Working professionals: messages without end

For many working adults, the biggest distraction is not reels but work messages. Office groups, client chats and email arrive all day and late into the evening. Replying instantly can feel professional, but it often leaves no time for focused work or rest.

Setting clear response windows, and telling people about them, protects both your work and your evenings without harming relationships with clients or colleagues.

Everyday example

Kavita, a home loan officer in Thane, used to answer builder and DSA messages until midnight. She set a status message with her working hours, checked messages at fixed times, and gave her branch number for urgent cases. Her response quality improved and her evenings came back.

Try this

1. Choose three fixed times a day to check work messages. 2. Add your working hours to your messaging status or email signature. 3. Mute non-urgent work groups after office hours.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 06 • Studies, Work and Focus

01 Which part of your day needs the most protected focus?

02 Where will your phone stay during your focus blocks?

03 What long task have you been avoiding?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

"Free" entertainment is never entirely free. You pay with attention, with time, with data, and sometimes with money through impulse buying or scams. This chapter helps you see those costs clearly.

Notice · Calculate · Pause · Choose

CHAPTER 07

Impulse buys and sponsored posts

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Notice › 2 Calculate › 3 Pause › 4 Choose

Short videos often mix entertainment and selling. A product can appear between two jokes, with a discount code and urgency. Buying in the moment is easier when the purchase feels like part of the video.

Three questions before you buy

1. Would I have wanted this if I had seen it in a shop, not a feed? 2. Can I wait 48 hours before paying? 3. Do I already have something that does the same job?

Summary

Feeds blend content and advertising. A 48-hour wait breaks the link between the clip and the card payment.

Scams and "easy money" content

Some accounts promise fast returns from trading tips, part-time online work, or loans that seem too easy. Many people share these posts without realising the risk. Warning signs include guaranteed profits, requests to pay upfront, pressure to act quickly, and private chats instead of official channels.

Everyday example

Vikram, a bank employee in Mumbai, was approached by a stranger with a "guaranteed" trading group. He paused, checked the group's registration, and noticed the pressure to pay quickly. He chose not to join, and he now teaches his colleagues the same checklist.

Try this

1. Make a list of any paid subscriptions or apps you rarely use. Cancel one this week. 2. Never pay anyone upfront for a job or investment opportunity you found online. 3. Talk to a trusted adult before making any money decision prompted by a stranger's post.

Count the hours

Small daily habits become large yearly totals. The table converts daily social media time into hours, workdays and full days across one year. The 98-minute row matches India's average reported by VTION and IAMAI in 2026; the 2-hour row is close to the figure for young urban users.

Daily use	Per year	Same as 8-hour workdays	Same as 24-hour days
30 minutes	182 hours	23 workdays	7.6 full days
1 hour	365 hours	46 workdays	15.2 full days
98 minutes	596 hours	75 workdays	24.8 full days
2 hours	730 hours	91 workdays	30.4 full days
3 hours	1,095 hours	137 workdays	45.6 full days

Seeing the total is not meant to make you feel guilty. It is meant to help you decide what that time is worth to you, and whether some of it could go to a skill, a friendship, rest or your family.

Try this

1. Check your phone's screen-time report for last week. 2. Use the table to estimate your yearly total. 3. Choose one goal that could use 30 minutes a day instead.

What people reported

A four-week break led to lasting change. In a US experiment, about 1,600 Facebook users were randomly assigned either to deactivate their accounts for four weeks or to carry on. The deactivation group spent more time with friends and family, reported small but significant gains in happiness and life satisfaction, and weeks later still used the Facebook app 22% less.

Source: Allcott, Braghieri, Eichmeyer and Gentzkow, American Economic Review, 2020

Digital fraud red flags

Fraudsters use social media, messaging apps and fake websites to reach people where they spend their time. Many scams look professional and create urgency. The safest habit is to slow down and verify before acting.

Red flag	Common example
Asked to share an OTP or PIN	Fake bank or customer care call
Asked to pay to receive money	Lottery, refund or job offer
Guaranteed high returns	Trading tips or investment groups
Loans with no checks	Unregistered instant loan apps
Paid "tasks" online	Like-and-review jobs that later ask for deposits

If you lose money to online fraud, call the national cybercrime helpline 1930 as soon as possible and report the case at cybercrime.gov.in. Then inform your bank. Acting quickly improves the chance of stopping the transfer.

Summary

No genuine bank, employer or government office will ask for your OTP, PIN or an upfront fee through social media.

lost to cyber fraud in India in 2024, up 206% from ₹7,465 crore in 2023. Complaints rose 42% to more than 22.6

₹22,846 cr

lakh.

Source: Minister of State for Home Affairs, written reply in Lok Sabha, reported by Scroll, July 2025

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 07 • Money, Time and Hidden Costs

01 Roughly how many hours a year do your social apps take?

02 What purchase have you made because of a feed, and do you still value it?

03 What would you do with 30 extra minutes a day?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

A phone on the dinner table can quietly change a conversation. Partners, friends, and children all notice when attention drifts. Restoring connection does not require giving up technology, only

Make space · Listen · Connect · Repeat

CHAPTER 08

Phubbing and its effects



ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER

1 **Make space** › 2 **Listen** › 3 **Connect** › 4 **Repeat**

"Phubbing", a blend of phone and snubbing, describes ignoring the person in front of you for your screen. Even when no one intends to be rude, repeated phubbing can make people feel less heard.

Simple family and couple rules

Setting

Agreement

Dinner

Phones in a basket or another room

Conversations

Put the phone face-down when someone is speaking

Outings

Take photos, then put the phone away for the main part of the event

Bedtime

No phones in bed for the first 15 minutes together

Summary

Choose a few shared phone-free moments. Protect them consistently, and say so when you slip.

What people reported

Meals were more enjoyable without phones. In a University of British Columbia study, more than 300 people ate at a restaurant with friends or family, randomly asked to keep phones on the table or put them away. With phones present they felt more distracted and enjoyed the meal less.

Source: Dwyer, Kushlev and Dunn, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, reported by ScienceDaily, 2018

Talking about it without blame

When you raise the topic, describe what you notice and how you feel, rather than what the other person is doing wrong. "I miss our evening chats" lands more gently than "You are always on your phone."

Everyday example

Asha and her husband agreed on a rule: their phones went on the kitchen shelf after 9 pm. The first attempt lasted two evenings. They talked about it, adjusted the time to 9:30, and kept it. Asha said the evening walks they resumed were the best part of the change.

Try this

1. Ask the people you live with which phone habit bothers them most. 2. Agree on one shared phone-free moment each day for a week. 3. Review the agreement together on Sunday and adjust it if needed.

The family group and the generations

Phone habits are not only a young person's issue. Many parents and grandparents spend hours on video platforms and family groups, and forward messages without checking them. Children notice adult habits and copy them.

Family groups can bring people together across cities and countries. A few simple norms keep them warm rather than noisy.

Family group norm	Why it helps
Good-morning messages in one daily thread	Less noise for everyone
Check before forwarding news or health advice	Stops misinformation
Call for important news, do not just post	Keeps big moments personal
Quiet hours after 10 pm	Protects everyone's sleep

Everyday example

A family spread across Odisha, Mumbai and Dubai agreed on a Sunday video call instead of daily forwards. The grandparents said they felt closer because they could see everyone's faces.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Couples, trust and the phone

Phones can quietly become a third person in a relationship. One partner scrolls in bed while the other wants to talk. Notifications interrupt conversations. Some couples feel tempted to check each other's phones, which can damage trust.

Healthy couples talk about phone habits openly, agree on shared phone-free times, and treat privacy with respect. If jealousy or monitoring becomes a regular pattern, a counsellor can help.

Try this

1. Agree on one daily phone-free time with your partner. 2. Ask each other which phone habit bothers you most, and listen without defending. 3. Plan one offline outing together this month.

Summary

Trust grows when phone habits are discussed openly, not policed in secret.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 08 • Relationships in the Scroll Era

01 When does the phone most often interrupt your relationships?

02 Which phone-free moment can your family protect?

03 Who would you like to spend more offline time with?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Your 7-Day Digital Detox A short, structured break can show you how much of your attention the feed has been using. The detox in this chapter is gentle. You will not delete your accounts. You will rebuild a few habits and notice

Day 1 Notice · Day 2 Silence · Day 3 Distance · Day 4 Replace

CHAPTER 09

The seven days



ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER

DAY 1
Notice

DAY 2
Silence

DAY 3
Distance

DAY 4
Replace

DAY 5
Share

DAY 6
Focus

DAY 7
Choose

Day	Focus	Action
1	Notice	Log every phone session, with time and reason
2	Silence	Turn off non-essential notifications
3	Distance	Charge the phone outside the bedroom
4	Replace	Choose one offline activity you enjoy and do it daily
5	Share	Eat one meal phone-free with someone
6	Focus	Complete two 25-minute focus blocks
7	Choose	Decide which three habits to keep

Summary

Notice, reduce, replace, and then choose what to keep. The detox ends with decisions, not deprivation.

Reflect at the end of the week

Look back at your notes. Which day was hardest? Which change felt easiest to keep? Pay attention to how sleep, mood, and focus shifted, even slightly.

Day 1

Day 4

Day 7

Baseline: your honest count | Replace: a new habit takes | shape | Choose: your lasting plan

Everyday example

Karthik, a college student, found that his evening scroll dropped from almost two hours to forty minutes by day five. He chose to keep the charging rule and the focus blocks, and he dropped the late-night notifications completely.

What people reported

One week off social media lifted mood. In a University of Bath trial, 154 adults were randomly assigned to stop using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok for one week or to carry on as usual. The break group reported better well-being and lower depression and anxiety scores after the week.

Source: Lambert and colleagues, Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 2022

Your daily detox journal

Writing down what happens each day makes the detox easier to learn from. Fill in one row each evening. Be honest; the journal is for you, not for anyone else.

Day

Minutes on social apps

Hardest moment

What I did instead

Mood (1–5)

1

2

3

4

5

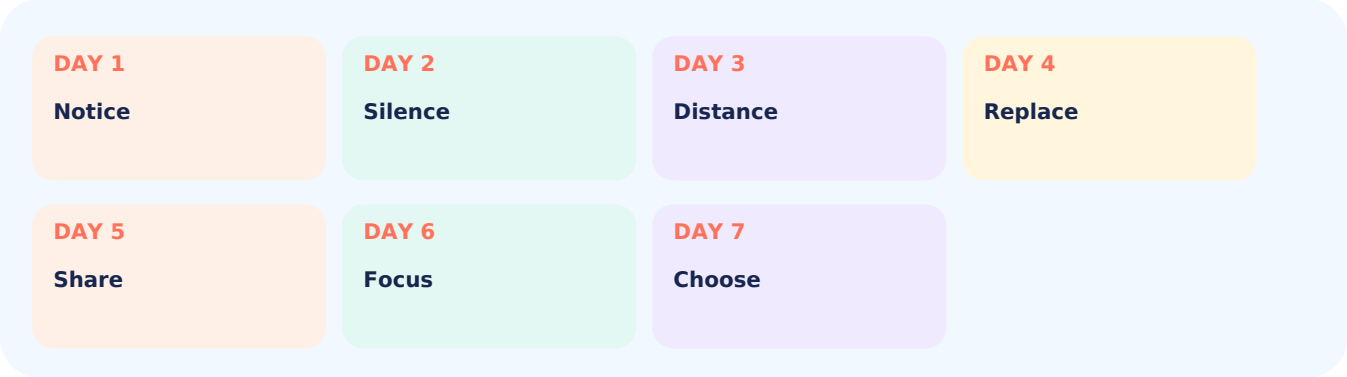
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7

Summary

Patterns become clear by day three or four. Use them to choose which habits to keep.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Fifty things to do instead of scrolling

Detox is easier when you know what to do with the time. Circle the ideas that suit you and keep this page somewhere you will see it.

1. Call a grandparent | 18. Teach a child a game | 35. Play carrom or chess
2. Go for a 15-minute walk | 19. Write tomorrow's plan | 36. Read the newspaper
3. Read ten pages of a book | 20. Try a new route home | 37. Draw a family tree
4. Cook a new dish | 21. Visit a neighbour | 38. Cycle around the block
5. Water the plants | 22. Watch the sunset | 39. Do a home workout
6. Write a letter by hand | 23. Repair something broken | 40. Learn to knit or sew
7. Do a puzzle or crossword | 24. Plant a seed | 41. Visit a museum
8. Play a board game | 25. Sort old photographs | 42. Practise a speech
9. Stretch or do yoga | 26. Do a skipping rope session | 43. Volunteer locally
10. Learn five words in a new | 27. Bake with family | 44. Plan a weekend trip
language | 28. Go to a temple, park or | 45. Make a scrapbook
11. Sketch something nearby | market | 46. Listen to a radio
12. Tidy one drawer | 29. Learn a card trick | programme
13. Visit a library | 30. Write in a journal | 47. Sit quietly for five minutes
14. Play a sport in the park | 31. Practise handwriting | 48. Write a short story
15. Listen to a full album | 32. Make a gratitude list | 49. Organise your desk
16. Practise an instrument | 33. Clean your bicycle | 50. Sleep early
17. Help with dinner | 34. Fly a kite

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 09 • Your 7-Day Digital Detox

01 Which detox day do you expect to be hardest, and why?

02 Which offline ideas from the list will you try?

03 Which three habits will you keep after day seven?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

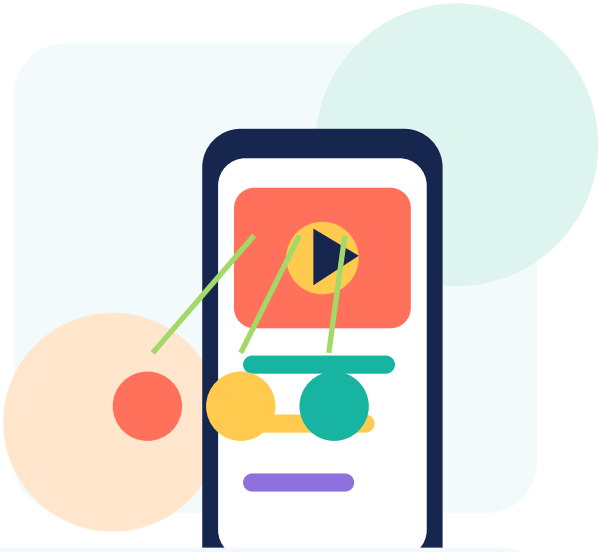
A detox shows what is possible. Building a healthy digital life means keeping the changes that work and adjusting them as life changes. This chapter offers a simple system you can return to.

Choose apps · Quiet alerts · Set boundaries · Check in

CHAPTER 10

Phone settings worth checking

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Choose apps → 2 Quiet alerts → 3 Set boundaries → 4 Check in

Most phones include built-in tools for screen time, app limits, focus modes, and notification controls. The exact menu names vary by brand and software version, so search your phone's settings for "screen time", "digital wellbeing", or "focus".

Setting	Why it helps
Notifications	Fewer interruptions from apps that do not need to reach you
App limits	A gentle daily ceiling for short-video apps
Focus or sleep mode	Silences apps during set hours
Home screen	Hides the most tempting apps on a second page
Grayscale	Makes colourful feeds less rewarding

Summary

Settings do not solve the habit, but they reduce the friction that keeps it going.

What people reported

Setting your own limits works. In a large US experiment, giving people a tool to set limits on their own future screen time substantially reduced their social media use. The researchers estimated that self-control problems account for about 31% of social media use, so tools that help you keep your own plan matter.

Source: Allcott, Gentzkow and Song, American Economic Review, 2022

A monthly check-in

Once a month, take ten minutes to ask four questions: What helped? What did not? What do I want more of? What will I change next month? Write the answers down so you can see your progress over time.

Try this

1. Set a recurring calendar reminder for the first Sunday of each month. 2. Answer the four questions in a notebook or in the tracker in the appendix. 3. Choose one change for the next month and keep it simple.

Tools, connectors and time-sinks

Not every app deserves the same place in your life. A simple way to decide is to sort your apps into three groups. Tools help you get something done. Connectors help you stay close to people. Time-sinks mainly fill time.

Group	Examples	Suggested place
Tools	Maps, banking, calendar, notes	Home screen, easy to reach
Connectors	Calls, messages, video chat	Home screen, with notifications for close contacts only
Time-sinks	Short-video feeds, endless browsing	Last screen, in a folder, with a daily limit

The point is not to delete time-sinks. It is to make sure they are something you choose, not something that chooses you.

Try this

1. Sort the apps on your home screen into the three groups. 2. Move every time-sink off your home screen. 3. Turn off notifications for all time-sinks.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Your personal digital charter

A charter is a short set of promises to yourself. Writing it down makes your intentions clearer and easier to keep. Fill in the blanks and stick it near your charging point.

I use my phone mainly to …

I will not use my phone during …

My phone sleeps at … (place and time)

My daily limit for short videos is …

When I feel the urge to scroll, I will …

I will review this charter on …

Signed

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 10 • Building a Healthy Digital Life

01 Which apps on your phone are time-sinks?

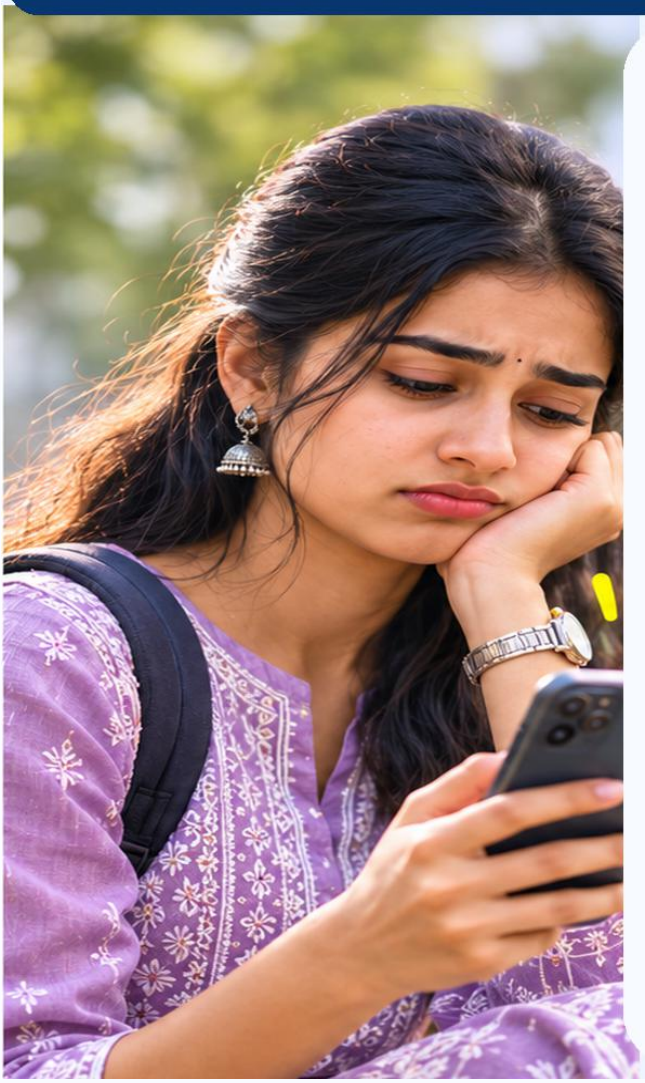
02 What does a healthy digital week look like for you?

03 When will you hold your monthly check-in?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



11 Mental Health, Anxiety and Loneliness

Connection over comparison

1. Notice feelings
2. Talk to someone
3. Seek support

SCROLL LESS • LIVE MORE

WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Feeds can make you feel connected and alone at the same time. This chapter looks at how constant comparison, notifications and sleep loss can affect mood, and what to do when the feeling becomes heavier than a passing bad day.

Notice · Share · Connect · Get help

CHAPTER 11

Anxiety, FOMO and the always-on mind

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Notice › 2 Share › 3 Connect › 4 Get help

Fear of missing out, often shortened to FOMO, describes a restless feeling that others are having more fun or making more progress. Constant updates keep that feeling alive. Many people report checking their phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night, often with a tight chest.

Research on adolescents, including work summarised by the World Health Organization in its 2024 Europe reports on youth health, links heavy social media use with sleep problems, low mood and emotional strain for some young people. The link is not the same for everyone, and it depends on what people do online and what else is happening in their lives.

Summary

Frequent checking can keep the mind on alert. Noticing that pattern is the first step toward calmer use.

Everyday example

Neha, a first-year college student in Delhi, felt anxious whenever her group chats went quiet. She began muting three chats for a week and scheduling two fixed check-in times. Her worry eased, and she said she felt less like she was waiting for a verdict on her day.

Try this

1. Note how you feel before and after opening social apps for three days. 2. Mute one group chat or account that regularly makes you anxious. 3. Choose two fixed times to check messages instead of checking all day.

Loneliness in a connected world

Being surrounded by online contacts does not always reduce loneliness. Many people describe a gap between the number of followers or friends they have and the number of people they can call on a bad night.

The World Health Organization's Commission on Social Connection reported in 2025 that about 1 in 6 people worldwide are affected by loneliness, with teenagers aged 13 to 17 reporting the highest levels. Loneliness is a feeling, not a character flaw. It often grows quietly when conversations become short and reactive, such as comments and reactions, rather than longer and more personal. Small offline habits can rebuild depth: a weekly call, a shared walk, or a standing meal with the same people.

Summary

Quantity of contacts is not the same as closeness. Deeper connection often grows from fewer, longer, face-to-face conversations.

Everyday example

Ravi, a sales manager in Hyderabad who worked from home, realised he had not spoken to a friend in person for months. He started a fortnightly cricket game in a local park. After six weeks he said the game was the highlight of his month.

Try this

1. List five people you could call if you had a hard day. 2. Call or meet one of them this week, for at least 20 minutes. 3. Notice how you feel afterward and repeat the habit next week.

When to ask for professional help

Some feelings need more support than self-help can give. Seek help from a doctor, psychologist or counsellor if low mood, anxiety or sleep problems last for more than two weeks, if they interfere with study or work, or if you have thoughts of harming yourself.

In India, you can contact the national Tele-MANAS helpline by dialling 14416 or 1-800-891-4416 for free, confidential mental health support. The helpline had received more than 10 lakh calls by May 2024. If you are in immediate danger, contact local emergency services at once.

Summary

Persistent low mood or anxiety deserves professional attention. Reaching out is a sign of good judgement, not weakness.

Try this

1. Save the Tele-MANAS number in your phone today. 2. Tell one trusted person how you have been feeling this week. 3. Book an appointment with a doctor if the feeling lasts two weeks or more.

Problematic social media use among adolescents in 44 countries rose from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022. In 2023 the US Surgeon General warned that teens using social media

7% → 11%

more than three hours a day face about double the risk of depression and anxiety symptoms.

Source: WHO Europe HBSC study, 2024; US Surgeon General advisory, reported by GPB/NPR, 2023

Small daily practices for a calmer mind

Simple daily habits will not cure a serious mental health condition, but they can steady the mind on ordinary hard days. The practices below are free, take a few minutes, and fit into most routines.

Practice	How to do it	Time
Slow breathing	Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 6. Repeat five times	2 minutes
Morning light	Step outside or sit near a window soon after waking	10 minutes
Gratitude note	Write three specific things that went well today	3 minutes
Body movement	Walk, stretch, dance or do household work actively	20 minutes
Worry window	Write worries down at a set time, then close the notebook	10 minutes

Everyday example

Manoj, a bank cashier in Bhubaneswar, felt tense every evening after work. He began a 20-minute walk without his phone before dinner. He said the walk became the time when his mind finally settled.

What people reported

Thirty minutes a day reduced loneliness. At the University of Pennsylvania, 143 students were randomly assigned either to limit Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to about 10 minutes each a day for three weeks or to carry on as usual. The limited group showed significant drops in loneliness and depression.

Source: Hunt, Marx, Lipson and Young, Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 2018

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 11 • Mental Health, Anxiety and Loneliness

01 How do you usually feel after a long session online?

02 Who are two people you can talk to on a hard day?

03 Which calming practice will you try daily this week?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



12 Creators, Performance Pressure and Earning O

Beyond the polished reel

1. **Create with purpose**
2. **Set boundaries**
3. **Understand income**

SCROLL LESS • LIVE MORE

WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

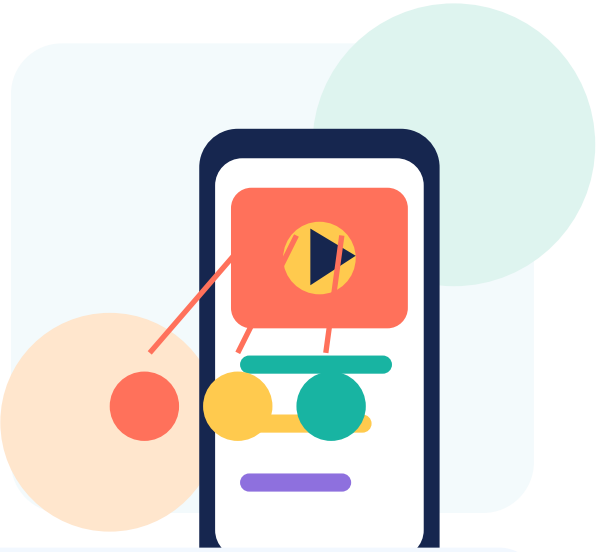
Many people now dream of making a living from their phones. This chapter looks at the pressure to perform for an audience, the uncertainty of creator income, and how to build a healthy

Make · Edit · Publish · Rest

CHAPTER 12

The pressure to perform

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER





Creators often describe a constant need to post, to measure reach, and to adapt to changing trends. A video that once worked may stop reaching people overnight, which can make effort feel unpredictable.

Performance pressure can turn a hobby into a second job. Sleep, relationships and rest can start to feel like losses if they interrupt posting schedules.

Summary

Creating is valuable, but a schedule built only on algorithms can drain energy quickly. Set limits before the pressure sets them for you.

Everyday example

Arjun, a tailor in Surat, started posting short sewing videos. After three months he felt he had to post daily. He chose two set days a week and kept the rest for his family and his shop. He said his videos improved once the pressure eased.

Try this

1. Decide how many days a week you can post without losing sleep. 2. Write down why you create, in one sentence.

3. Take one full day off posting each week and notice how you feel.

Income from online work: know the risks

Income from brand deals, ad revenue and creator programmes can change from month to month. Many people spend money in expectation of future earnings and then struggle when payments slow.

Scams also target aspiring creators. Be wary of offers that ask for upfront fees, promise guaranteed followers or views, or pressure you to share personal bank details. Legitimate brands rarely ask for payment to work with you.

Summary

Plan income conservatively, keep an emergency fund, and never pay to be paid.

Try this

1. Set aside a percentage of any online earnings in a separate savings account. 2. Check every brand offer against the company's official website before replying. 3. Never share OTPs or bank passwords with anyone who contacts you online.

monetised content creators in India, influencing an estimated $350 to $400 billion of consumer spending,

2 to 2.5 mn

according to Boston Consulting Group.

Source: BCG, From Content to Commerce, 2025

Balance between identity and audience

When a feed becomes your main source of approval, your sense of self can start to depend on numbers. Healthy creators keep a life that does not appear online: friends, hobbies and work that no one sees.

Ask yourself whether you would still enjoy the activity if no one watched. If the answer is no, that may be a useful signal to adjust your goals or your rest.

Everyday example

Lakshmi, a home baker in Kochi, realised she was checking her views before tasting her own bakes. She began baking one batch a week purely for her family, with no camera. She said the baking felt like a pleasure again.

Try this

1. Do one creative activity this week without posting it. 2. List three ways you define yourself that do not involve your online presence. 3. Notice when you check your numbers, and what you feel afterward.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



A healthy creator routine

Creators who last for years usually treat content as work with boundaries, not as an always-on performance. A planned week keeps quality up and burnout down.

Day	Focus
Monday	Plan ideas and scripts
Tuesday	Record
Wednesday	Edit
Thursday	Publish and reply to comments for one hour
Friday	Learn a new skill or study what worked
Weekend	Rest, family and offline life

Summary

Batching work into set days reduces the urge to check numbers all day.

Try this

1. Map your current creating week, honestly. 2. Choose one day each week with no posting and no checking stats. 3. Limit comment replies to one fixed time slot.

What people reported

Checking messages less often lowered stress. In a University of British Columbia study, 124 adults spent one week checking email only three times a day and another week checking as often as they liked. They felt less stressed in the limited week. The same idea applies to comments and direct messages.

Source: Kushlev and Dunn, Computers in Human Behavior, 2015

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 12 • Creators, Performance Pressure and Earning Online

01 Why do you create or post online?

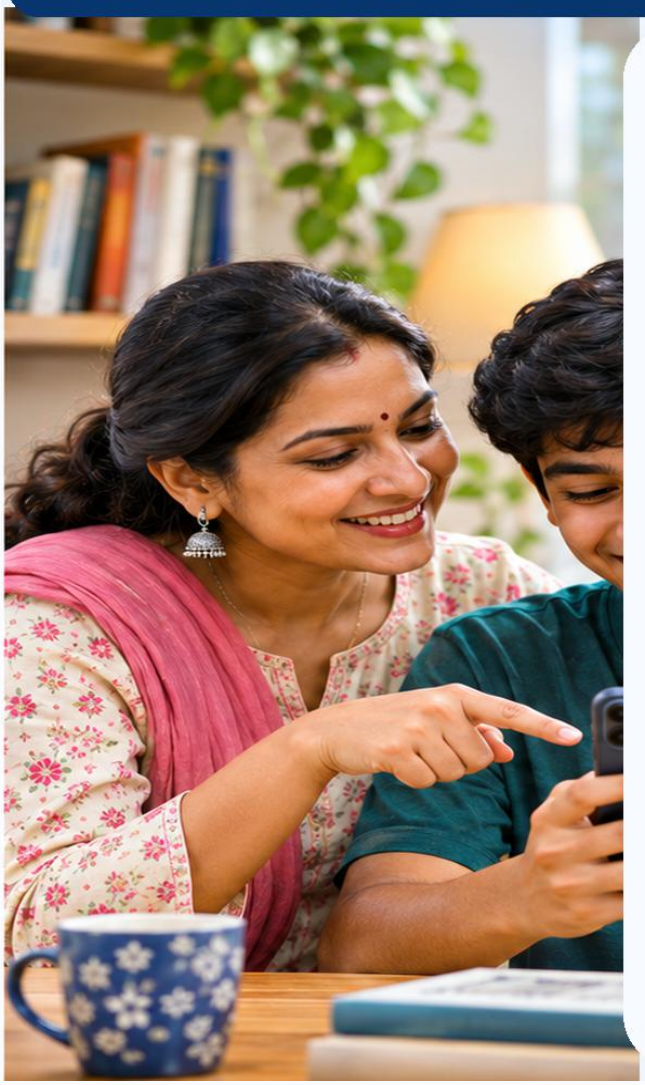
02 How do numbers like views and likes affect your mood?

03 What boundary will you set around posting?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



13 Cyberbullying, Privacy and Digital Safety

Safety comes first

1. **Protect accounts**
2. **Save evidence**
3. **Ask for help**

SCROLL LESS • LIVE MORE

WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

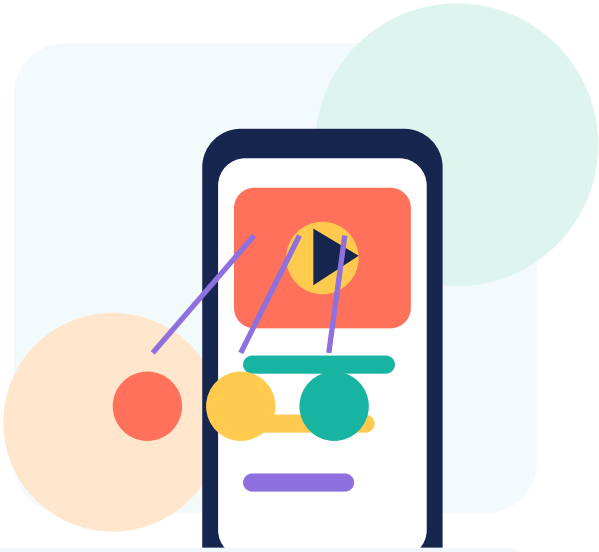
Online harm can follow people home. This chapter covers cyberbullying, harassment, privacy settings and how to respond when something goes wrong, with practical steps for young people,

Stop · Check sender · Protect data · Report

CHAPTER 13

What cyberbullying looks like

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



1 Stop → 2 Check sender → 3 Protect data → 4 Report

Cyberbullying includes repeated insults, threats, rumours, the sharing of private images, and fake accounts created to humiliate someone. It can happen in group chats, comments, gaming platforms and direct messages.

India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) recorded 1,01,928 cybercrime cases in 2024, up 17.9% from 86,420 in 2023, even as total crime fell 6%. Maharashtra recorded the highest number of cyber stalking and bullying cases against women and children in the country, at 403.

Summary

Cyberbullying is a serious harm, not a joke or a rite of passage. Keeping records and seeking help early makes a difference.

Everyday example

A Class 9 student in Pune received a stream of cruel messages in a class group. Her parents helped her take screenshots, report the group to the school, and block the senders. The school then held a session on respectful online behaviour for the whole class.

Try this

1. Save screenshots of any harmful messages, with dates and usernames. 2. Use the platform's report and block tools immediately. 3. Tell a trusted adult or teacher the same day.

Privacy settings that matter

Most platforms offer settings for who can see your posts, tag you, message you or find you by phone number. Review them at least twice a year, because defaults can change after app updates.

Setting	Why it helps
Private account	Only approved followers can see your posts
Message filters	Limits messages from unknown accounts
Tagging approval	You approve photos before they appear on your profile
Location sharing	Turn off precise location for posts and stories

Summary

Small privacy changes reduce exposure. Check them regularly, not only once.

Try this

1. Switch your account to private if that suits your goals. 2. Turn on message filters for requests from strangers. 3. Remove location tags from past posts that reveal your home or school.

Responding and recovering

Recovery from online harm takes time. Some people feel shame, anger or fear for weeks. Support from family, friends or a counsellor can help. If images or personal data have been shared without consent, report to the platform and to the national cybercrime reporting portal, cybercrime.gov.in, or the helpline 1930.

Summary

You did not cause the abuse. Report it, keep evidence, and reach out for support.

Try this

1. Save the cybercrime helpline 1930 and the portal cybercrime.gov.in on your phone. 2. Agree with your family how you will respond if someone is harassed online. 3. Check on a friend who seems withdrawn after an online incident.

What people reported

Reporting quickly gets money back. Since 2021, people who reported online financial fraud through the 1930 helpline and the national reporting system have helped stop more than ₹7,000 crore from reaching fraudsters, across more than 23 lakh complaints. Speed matters: the sooner a case is reported, the better the chance of freezing the money.

Source: Minister of State for Home, written reply in Rajya Sabha, reported by News On AIR, December 2025

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



For parents: keeping children safe online

Children need protection and trust at the same time. Technical controls help, but the most important protection is a child who feels safe telling a parent when something goes wrong.

Some offenders contact children through games and social apps, build trust, and then try to pressure them with threats or requests for images. Children should know that they will not be punished for telling, that they should never pay or send anything under pressure, and that adults can get help from the police.

Step

What to do

Controls

Use built-in parental controls and family-link tools for younger children

Accounts

Check age limits and privacy settings together

Devices

Keep devices in shared spaces for younger children

Talk

Ask regularly who they talk to and what they enjoy online

Plan

Agree that they can tell you anything without losing their phone

Summary

Controls reduce risk; trust brings problems to light early.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 13 • Cyberbullying, Privacy and Digital Safety

01 Are your privacy settings set the way you want them?

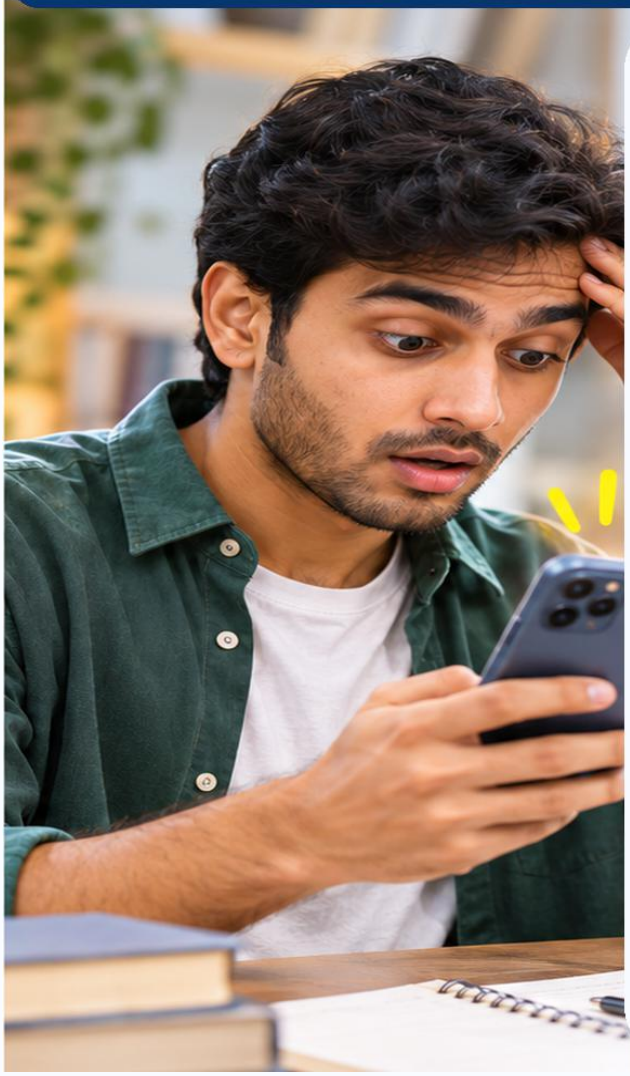
02 Who would you tell if you were harassed online?

03 Which helpline numbers have you saved?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



14 Misinformation, Outrage and Polarisation

Pause before sharing

1. **Check the source**
2. **Verify the facts**
3. **Avoid outrage**

SCROLL LESS • LIVE MORE

WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

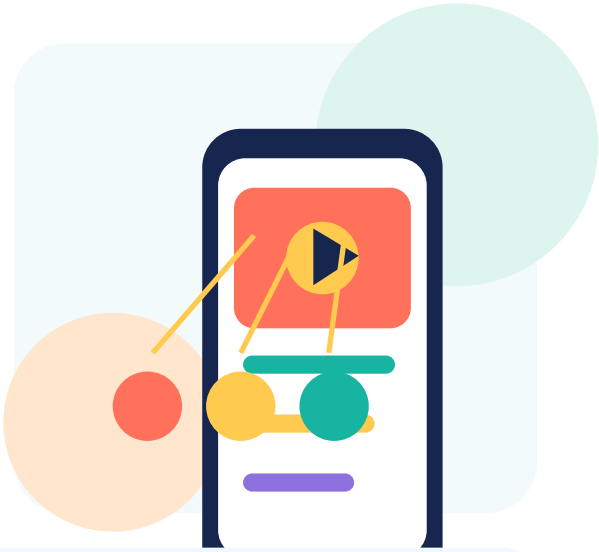
Feeds reward strong emotion, and false or misleading content often travels faster than corrections. This chapter helps you spot manipulated content, slow down before sharing, and keep conversations respectful even when you disagree.

Notice claim · Find source · Cross-check · Share wisely

CHAPTER 14

Why outrage spreads

ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER





A study of about 126,000 news stories shared on Twitter between 2006 and 2017 found that false stories were 70% more likely to be retweeted than true ones (Vosoughi, Roy and Aral, Science, 2018). Content that provokes anger, fear or disgust often gets more reactions and shares. Algorithms that rank posts by engagement can amplify this, even when the content is untrue.

Repeated exposure to outrage can make people feel that the world is more hostile than it is, and it can harden opinions against people who think differently.

Summary

Strong emotion is a signal to pause, not a reason to share.

Everyday example

A forwarded video claimed that a local water supply was contaminated. Before sharing, a family member checked the claim with the municipal corporation's official account and found it was an old video from another city. The correction was posted in the same group.

Try this

1. Before sharing anything that makes you angry, wait ten minutes. 2. Ask: who made this, and what is their evidence? 3. Check one official or trusted source before forwarding.

A simple verification checklist

Check	What to look for
Source	Is the account known, verified and transparent?
Date	Is the content recent, or an old clip shared again?
Evidence	Are there reliable sources, data or official statements?
Emotion	Does it push you to act fast or blame a group?
Reverse search	Does a reverse image or video search show earlier uses?

Summary

Five quick checks catch many false posts. Use them before you share, not after.

Try this

1. Try one reverse image search on a post you were about to share. 2. Use the checklist on three posts this week. 3. Share a verified correction when you find an error you passed on.

What people reported

A one-second pause improved what people shared. In experiments by researchers at MIT and the University of Regina, simply asking people to think about whether a headline was accurate cut the sharing of false news roughly in half in surveys. A similar prompt sent to more than 5,000 Twitter users improved the quality of news they shared afterward.

Source: Pennycook, Rand and colleagues, Nature, 2021

Talking across differences

Online arguments rarely change minds. Conversations in person, with curiosity and patience, are more likely to build understanding. Ask questions, listen for what the other person cares about, and agree on what you do not know.

Everyday example

Two cousins in Lucknow disagreed sharply about a political post. Instead of commenting, they met for tea and each explained why the issue mattered to them. They still disagreed, but the family group stayed calm.

Try this

1. Mute a thread that keeps making you angry for one week. 2. Ask one question before offering your opinion in a debate. 3. Choose one offline conversation this month with someone you disagree with.

India was ranked the country at highest risk from misinformation and disinformation in the World Economic Forum's Global Risks

No. 1

Report 2024.

Source: World Economic Forum, reported by YourStory, January 2024

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Deepfakes and AI-generated content

New tools can create realistic fake images, voices and videos in minutes. They are used for jokes and art, but also for scams, false endorsements and harassment. A video of a famous person promoting an investment, or a voice note from a "relative" asking for urgent money, may be fake.

Check	What to look for
Too good to be true	Celebrities promising guaranteed returns
Urgency	Pressure to send money or act immediately
Odd details	Mismatched lip movement, strange hands, unnatural voice
Source	Is it on the person's official, verified account?
Call back	Phone the relative or office on a number you already know

Everyday example

Ramesh received a voice message that sounded like his nephew, asking for money after an accident. He called his nephew directly and found he was safe at work. The message had been created to trick him.

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 14 • Misinformation, Outrage and Polarisation

01 What was the last post you shared without checking?

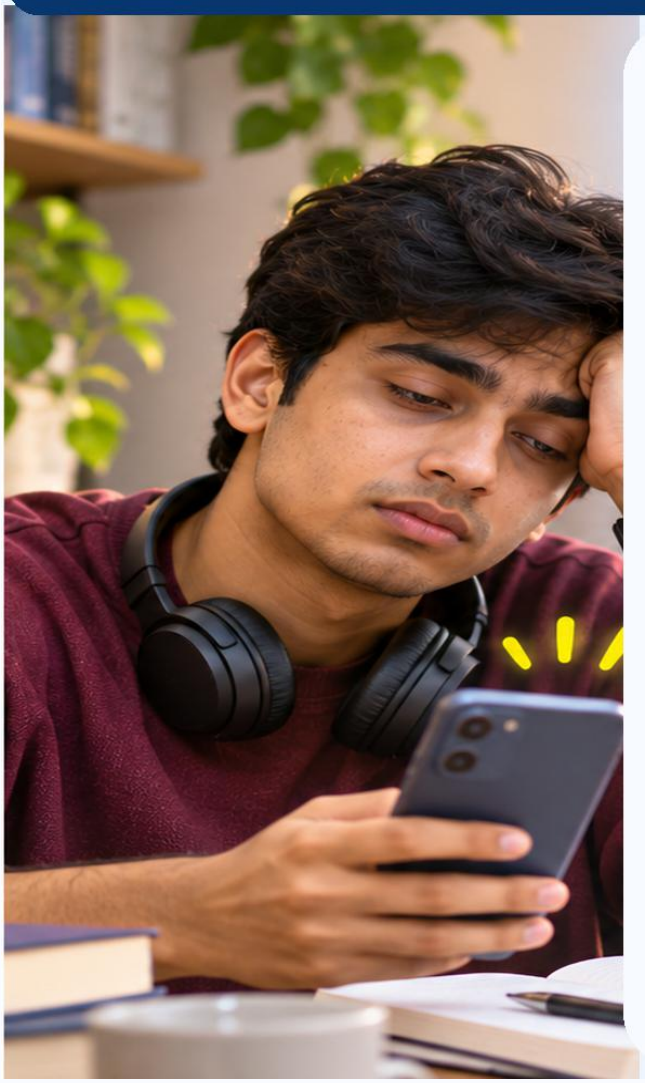
02 Which verification step will you use every time?

03 How can you disagree online without anger?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:



15 Eyes, Posture and Body Health

Healthy screen habits

1. **Rest your eyes**
2. **Improve posture**
3. **Move outdoors**

SCROLL LESS • LIVE MORE

WHAT THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES

Screens affect more than attention. Long sessions can strain the eyes, stiffen the neck and shoulders, and encourage a sedentary day. This chapter offers simple, practical habits for keeping your body comfortable while you use your devices.

Blink · Sit tall · Take breaks · Go outside

CHAPTER 15

Digital eye strain



ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER



Digital eye strain, sometimes called computer vision syndrome, can cause dry eyes, headaches and blurred vision after long screen sessions. Blinking less while focused on a screen is one common reason.

A widely recommended habit is the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something about 20 feet (6 metres) away for about 20 seconds. The American Academy of Ophthalmology also gives advice on screen use and eye health.

Summary

Frequent distance breaks, good lighting and blinking can reduce eye strain for most people.

Try this

1. Set a 20-minute timer and practise the 20-20-20 rule for one day. 2. Keep your screen at arm's length and slightly below eye level. 3. Use a room light that does not reflect on the screen.

What people reported

Reminders to take 20-20-20 breaks eased strain. Researchers at Aston University in the UK gave 29 people with eye strain software that reminded them to take 20-20-20 breaks. During two weeks of reminders, dryness, sensitivity and discomfort fell markedly. When the reminders stopped, symptoms returned, so the habit works only while you keep it.

Source: Aston University, Contact Lens and Anterior Eye, news release September 2022

Neck, shoulders and posture

Looking down at a phone for long periods places strain on the neck and upper back. Many people find their shoulders hunch forward during long sessions. Small changes can help: raise the phone to eye level, support your back, and move every 30 minutes.

Habit	Benefit
Phone at eye level	Less bending of the neck
Feet flat, back supported	Reduces slouching
Shoulder rolls every hour	Eases tension
Walk for five minutes	Counters long sitting

Summary

Your body reacts to how you hold your phone. Move often and bring the screen up toward your eyes.

Try this

1. Do ten slow shoulder rolls every time you finish a video. 2. Stand and walk for two minutes after each focus block. 3. Check your posture at the start of each session.

Sleep, movement and the whole body

Long screen sessions often replace movement. Less activity, irregular meals and late nights can all affect energy and mood. Sleep and movement are closely linked: many people sleep better on days they walk or exercise.

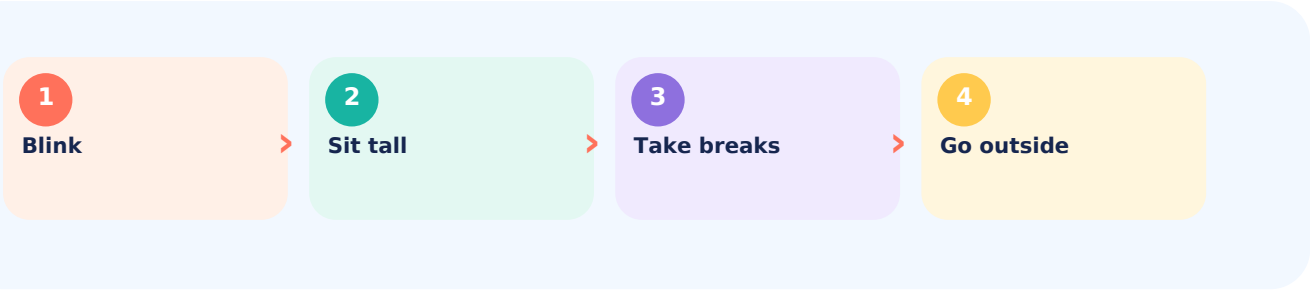
Everyday example

Divya, an office worker in Gurugram, had neck pain most afternoons. She raised her laptop on a box, used a separate keyboard, and took a 10-minute walk after lunch. Within a month, her pain had eased and she felt more alert at work.

Try this

1. Take a short walk after one meal each day this week. 2. Set a screen curfew one hour before bed. 3. See a doctor if eye or neck pain continues for more than a few days.

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Children's eyes and outdoor play

Short-sightedness among urban Indian children aged 5 to 15 rose from 4.4% in 1999 to 21.1% in 2019, and could reach 48% by 2050 if the trend continues (see "By the numbers" at the start of this book). Long hours of close-up work on screens and books, and less time outdoors, are believed to play a part.

Time outside in daylight is one of the simplest protective habits for children's eyes. It also supports sleep, mood and physical fitness.

Habit	Why it helps
Daily outdoor play	Daylight and distance viewing support eye health
Regular eye check-ups	Short-sightedness is caught early
Screens at arm's length	Less strain on focusing muscles
Breaks every 20 minutes	Relaxes the eyes during study
Good lighting while reading	Reduces squinting and fatigue

Try this

1. Plan at least one hour of outdoor play for children each day. 2. Book an eye test if a child squints, sits close to the TV or complains of headaches. 3. Add a 20-20-20 reminder to study time.

What people reported

Forty extra minutes outdoors protected eyesight. In a three-year trial in 12 primary schools in Guangzhou, China, schools added one 40-minute outdoor class each day. Among about 1,600 children followed up, 30.4% in those schools became short-sighted, compared with 39.5% in schools that kept their usual routine.

Source: He and colleagues, JAMA, 2015, reported by EurekAlert

Reflect & Reset

CHAPTER 15 • Eyes, Posture and Body Health

01 Where do you feel strain after screen use: eyes, neck, back?

02 How many minutes do you or your children spend outdoors daily?

03 Which body-care habit will you start this week?

MY ONE CHANGE THIS WEEK

I will start on:

I will review it on:

Back to the real feed

The feed will always be there, and it will always be designed to hold your attention. You cannot change that. You can change how much of your day it takes and what you choose to do with the time you get back.

Start with one small change. Keep it for a week. Then add another. The aim is not a phone-free life. It is a life where you decide what gets your attention.

Three things to remember 1. Notice the pattern. 2. Make one change at a time. 3. Share the work with people you care about.

Tools and trackers

Screen-time log (one week)

Day

Total minutes

Main app

Reason I opened it

Mood (1–5)

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Sun

Family phone agreement

We agree to the following. We will review it on _____.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

30-Day Habit Tracker

Choose one habit. Missing a day is fine: begin again tomorrow.

THE HABIT I AM BUILDING

DAY 01 ☐	DAY 02 ☐	DAY 03 ☐	DAY 04 ☐	DAY 05 ☐
DAY 06 ☐	DAY 07 ☐	DAY 08 ☐	DAY 09 ☐	DAY 10 ☐
DAY 11 ☐	DAY 12 ☐	DAY 13 ☐	DAY 14 ☐	DAY 15 ☐
DAY 16 ☐	DAY 17 ☐	DAY 18 ☐	DAY 19 ☐	DAY 20 ☐
DAY 21 ☐	DAY 22 ☐	DAY 23 ☐	DAY 24 ☐	DAY 25 ☐
DAY 26 ☐	DAY 27 ☐	DAY 28 ☐	DAY 29 ☐	DAY 30 ☐

WHAT HELPED MOST?



My One Change This Week

My one change this week:

I will start on: I will review it on:

Weekly Reflection

1. What went well?

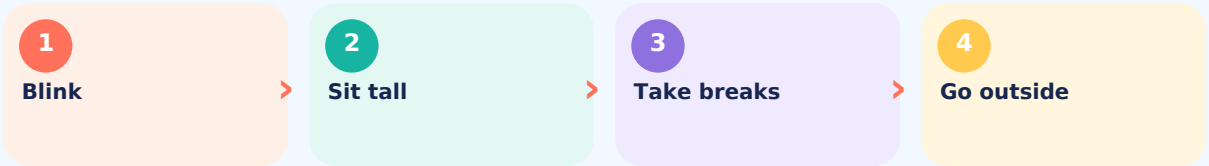
2. What was difficult?

3. What will I try next?

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Algorithm	The set of rules an app uses to decide what to show you next
Attention residue	Thoughts that stay with a previous task after you switch
Autoplay	When the next video starts without you choosing it
Deepfake	A fake image, voice or video made to look real using AI
Digital detox	A planned break or reduction in device use
Digital wellbeing	Using technology in ways that support health and relationships
Doomscrolling	Scrolling through distressing news or posts for a long time
FOMO	Fear of missing out on what others are doing
Friction	A small step that slows down an automatic habit
Infinite scroll	A feed with no natural end point
Phubbing	Ignoring a person in front of you to use your phone
Variable reward	A reward that arrives unpredictably, which keeps people checking

VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



Help and resources

Need	Where to turn (India)
Emergency	Dial 112
Mental health support	Tele-MANAS: 14416 or 1-800-891-4416
Online fraud or cybercrime	Helpline 1930 and cybercrime.gov.in
A child in distress or danger	Childline: 1098
Technology overuse clinic	SHUT Clinic, NIMHANS, Bengaluru
Eye strain or vision problems	An ophthalmologist or optometrist

Helpline numbers can change. Check them on official government websites before printing this book.

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VISUAL RECAP • PUT THE IDEA INTO ACTION



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