

1.3 Disconnect

Take time to disengage from your electronic devices and other external interruptions, giving your mind a chance to rest or focus.

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Disconnecting means putting yourself in an interruption-free zone so that you act instead of react. It's a method of preventing yourself from interacting with people and posts online when it's not urgent. We all have a natural drive that makes us want to respond instantly to notifications as they appear and seek out distractions to avoid being present. However, research shows that frequent distractions increase our stress and decrease our productivity. When we can concentrate without distractions, we are free to focus on what matters most.

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- Decreases distraction-induced stress.
- Enables you to be more focused and in control of your time.
- Allows you to be present and engaged with life.

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- Sometimes, responsibilities or obligations require you to be on call, meaning you cannot disconnect.
- At first, the practice may feel awkward, unnecessary, or uncomfortable.

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Airplane Mode or Muting

One easy way to disconnect is to switch your phone to Airplane Mode. This will prevent you from becoming distracted by the numerous notifications. The advantage of using Airplane Mode over turning off your phone is that it still allows you to easily draft texts and emails, which will be sent when you turn off Airplane Mode.

If you cannot or will not put your phone in Airplane Mode, silencing it is another option. This can at least help you partly disconnect. Alternatively, you can turn off the Wi-Fi and data on your phone so that it is essentially silenced and then configure your phone to ring only when certain people call.

Leave Your Phone Behind

To disconnect one step further, you can engage in the full expression of this practice: leave your phone at home when you go out. By doing so, you free yourself to be completely present with whatever you are doing or whomever you are with, without the temptation to distract yourself with your phone during a dead moment. These moments, when energy drops, can be chances for meditation and useful opportunities for increasing awareness of your surroundings and inner workings.

Another option is to confine your work to a specific work phone. During times when you want to

disconnect, leave that phone behind and only take your private phone, of which only select people have the number.

Isolate from Physical Distractions

To fully disconnect, you need to ensure your physical conditions are free of distractions as well. If people, noise, or other physical distractions keep intruding on your work environment, consider moving to a quieter work location or putting a Do Not Disturb signal on your desk or office door.

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1. Meditation and Vipassana Retreats offer other ways to disconnect. They are discussed in the Spirit chapter (Tool 6.1 and 6.3).
2. Work In Mind discusses a study at UC Irvine about interruptions in the workplace:
<https://workinmind.org/2019/01/17/one-third-of-office-workers-lack-distraction-free-spaces/>.