Digital wellbeing

What is digital wellbeing?

Digital well-being refers to an individual's subjective well-being in an environment which is social, in the presence of media.[1] The media being referred to in this context are smartphones, social media, gaming, and streaming platforms.

Why is it important to look after your digital wellbeing?

We all know that digital media is essentially mandatory for living our day to day lives now, but digital media also plays a role on influencing how we act and what we believe in our day to lives as well, going so far as to influence our political participation.[2] While social media usually gets a bad reputation, the truth is that there are both advantages (increased feeling of belongingness, gained access to convenient and relevant information) and disadvantages (Stress, misinformation, embarrassment, greater risk for depression and anxiety)[1][3][5] to it, and which ones you receive depends upon how you use it. Keeping this in mind, we've gathered research backed information on how you can assess your own digital well-being.

How to assess your digital well being:

1) Measure time spent:
   A study done on 143 undergraduate students had them limit their social media usage to a maximum of 10 minutes a day, and found that they had significant reductions in loneliness and depression. The results indicated that limiting social media usage to a maximum of 30 minutes a day can lead to significant improvements in well-being.[4] Any amount of screen time over 2 hours a day has been associated with short sleep durations and unhealthy eating habits due to mindless eating while using electronic devices.[7]

Now, with the pandemic having significantly increased our screen time,[6] we understand that cutting a daily usage of 3 to 4 hours down to 30 minutes could sound easier said than done. Here's a couple of tips to help out, based on a study that analysed 204 different research articles on interventions for reducing screen time for people aged 0 to 18:[8]

- Setting goals and planning:
  Make sure to note down your current amount of time spent currently and your ideal amount of time you want to cut down on, this will help you set benchmarks and give you a physical form to refer to when checking on your progress.
- Reviewing goals

2) Having difficulty putting phone away and suffering when you do:[9]
Having a difficult time putting away your phone could be an indicator of behaviour addiction. This is similar to drug addiction, except that with behaviour addiction, the subject is addicted to the feeling brought about by doing the action.

Some signs to look out for in behaviour addiction are:[10]

- Engaging in the behaviour a majority of the time, along with thinking about or making arrangements to engage in the behaviour.
- Using the behaviour as a method of coping with emotions, or to 'feel normal'.
- Continuously engaging in the behaviour despite having physical or mental harm on oneself.
- Having difficulty with cutting down the amount of the engaged behaviour, despite wanting to stop.
- Experiencing signs of withdrawal such as irritability or depression when trying to stop the usage.
- Hiding or trying to minimise the extent of how bad the problem is.

Over the coming days, we're also going to be telling you how to counter this need for using digital media.