

Health & Wellness reading top priority in 2021 but avoid ‘endless scrolling’ and negativity says expert



Last year saw more than 140,000 digital magazine issues distributed and read 99 million times on [Readly](#), the digital subscription app. Following a year of doom and gloom, how can we ensure what we are reading is having a positive impact on our mental wellbeing and how do we strike the right balance for a healthy digital diet?

Across the UK people are spending increasing amounts of time online as the coronavirus lockdown continues. Whilst devices help us to connect with friends and family, a Yougov survey commissioned by magazine app Readly, has revealed that endless scrolling online has an adverse effect on mental health, with almost 8 in 10 Brits admitting to feeling down from mindless scrolling. With work, home school and online shopping set to continue, it is important to review our digital habits and ensure our behaviours are doing us good.

Leading Psychologist Dr Becky Spelman gives her top tips on how to foster a healthy digital diet for positive mental and emotional wellbeing:

- 1. Keep informed, but don't obsess about the news.** Choose a number of trusted news sources and check in with them once a day to stay informed about the current situation and advice. Then leave it at that. There is nothing to be gained from reading breaking news continually throughout the day, which is often negative and something that many people find immensely stressful.
- 2. Mindless scrolling is a learned habit - the easiest way to unlearn it is to replace it with another behaviour.** It can be tempting to endlessly scroll social media at the moment but constant exposure is not good for us. Try replacing the 'urge' with another more positive behaviour instead. Have your favourite magazines or books "at the ready" to suit your mood, have a crossword puzzle or sudoku to hand or read something to fuel a hobby or passion.
- 3. Focus digital time on reading around hobbies that enrich your life.** Use the internet to facilitate positive thinking and happiness in your life by focussing on hobbies such as craft, DIY, yoga or cooking or using a site such as Pinterest to collect images that you find inspiring and positive. Do it for as long as it brings you joy then put away your device. There is a magazine for every possible hobby or interest. Magazine app [Readly](#) has over 5,000 titles all on the one platform so if you've always loved photography, knitting or cycling- you can discover and read instantly online at home. This is also a good time to explore interests that you've never had time to develop in the past.
- 4. It's okay to say no to zoom calls.** Do use the internet to stay in touch with family and other loved ones—but don't feel that you have to accept every single invitation to a Zoom social or even work meet-up. It's OK to prioritise yourself and take breaks when you need to.
- 5. Take regular digital breaks.** For the body and mind alike, it is essential to step away from the digital world at regular

intervals. If you can get out for a walk, or even just to your garden or balcony, try leaving all the devices behind, do some stretches, engage in mindfulness meditation, or just empty your mind. Having a few mini digital detoxes throughout the day will do you no end of good.

6. **Focus digital time on planning for the future.** We don't know how long the current restrictions will last, but we do know that, at some point, they will come to an end. While this is not the right moment to start booking holidays or enrolling on special interest courses, you can certainly start to plan for the future. If you've always dreamt of being a gardener or photographer, for example, you can read up on it and find out about the courses you can do, and the places you can visit, in the future.

Scientists at the University of Sussex found that reading for just six minutes lowered stress levels by 68 percent—a stronger effect than going for a walk (42 percent), drinking a cup of tea or coffee (54 percent), or listening to music (61 percent). A quarter (25%) of us intend to read more about health and wellness this year, which aligns with the top two motivations this year: exercising more (42%) and eating more healthily (38%).

Readly's top five health and wellbeing searches across its 5,000 digital magazines and newspapers during January 2021 were:

1. Vegan
2. Keto
3. Cycling
4. Running
5. Yoga

After a year of lockdowns and much uncertainty, there's a growing need for some positivity and inspiration. Alongside health and wellbeing, it's encouraging to see that more people are planning to read around hobbies and activities that keep them busy such as cooking, DIY and interior design as they seek a source of inspiration, entertainment and education at home. Similarly, people have had enough of 'stale makers' and are seeking some fresh thinking this year." **says Ranj Begley, UK Managing Director and Chief Content Officer at Readly**

Visit www.readly.com for further information.

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