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Leading Psychologist Dr Becky Spelman gives her top tips on how to avoid endless social media scrolling, reduce anxiety, and help foster good mental and emotional health through reading during the coronavirus crisis.

- 1. It is not realistic to suggest staying completely away from social media.** Rather than trying to do so, consider giving yourself a particular time slot every day to check your social media outlet of choice. You may find that you start to feel anxious and worried; that's OK. You don't have to deny your feelings. However, make sure that you stick to your time slot, and then do something else.
- 2. Mindless scrolling through your phone is a learned habit, and the easiest way to unlearn it is to replace it with another one.** This involves using a certain amount of discipline and taking up another behaviour instead. You can have several magazines or books "on the go" instead, so that you can always read something to suit your mood; an easy magazine article about fashion trends for a bit of escapism, and something more demanding for when you are feeling up to it.
- 3. Explore your interests with magazines.** As well as current activities you love this is also a good time to explore interests that you've never had time to develop in the past. There is literally a magazine out there for every possible hobby or interest. Magazine app [Readly](#) is the "spotify of magazines" with 5,000 titles - so if you've always loved knitting or body building - they will have options that you can discover and read instantly online on your phone or tablet.
- 4. Work some meditation or relaxation techniques into your day.** This can be as simple as just sitting out of doors, or near an open window, for ten minutes every day while you let your mind rest and just experience the sounds, sights, and smells around you.
- 5. Your reading habits can dovetail with your other interests.** If you love cooking, for example, you could read about nutrition in wellness magazines, or get lost in a book with a food-related theme, such as *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris.
- 6. Enjoy nature.** If you have a garden or access to a park, you're in luck! Most people find that exploring and enjoying nature is very rewarding. But even if you live in a small flat or apartment, you can watch the birds you see from your window or take care of a houseplant.
- 7. Consider setting up a magazine club with some of your friends and family.** You can meet up online once a week to discuss what you are reading. If you all read the same magazine or article, you can talk about it together – or share tips on what you have been reading separately.



8. **Plan 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 in a general way. So, if you've always dreamt of being a photographer, for example, you can read up on it in a magazine and find out about the courses you can do, and the places you can visit, in the future.