

# *Balance your screen time*

– and boost your  
mental strength in  
a digital world

In collaboration with  
UNIVERSITY OF  
COPENHAGEN



**Danica Pension**



# Digital downside

Our smartphones and digital devices give us countless benefits. With screens close at hand or in our bag, we have gained accessibility, flexibility and more efficient work processes. Our digital devices are so handy and smart that it is hard to imagine how we would cope without them.

But there is also a downside to this accessibility, flexibility and efficiency. Many of us find that we are regularly interrupted by notifications, messages, invitations to meetings, calls and many other distractions – so much that it affects our concentration, our productivity and ultimately our mental well-being.

The brain is not designed to constantly process information from a screen. We need to balance our screen time to allow our brain to recuperate and to regenerate our mental strength. Otherwise, excessive screen time can lead to stress.

Generating mental strength is not a case of switching off our screens entirely – but about balancing our screen time and striking the right work life balance in a digital world. A way of achieving this balance is to use the five tips you find in this booklet.

Many Danes feel that they are addicted to their smartphone. Of those most addicted, 29% find that they suffer from stress.

*Source: the SmartSleep Experiment,  
university of Copenhagen/  
Naja Hulvej Rod, 2018*

# Track your screen time

With this app, you can track how much time you spend on your smartphone or tablet. This is the first step in achieving (or maintaining) balance.

RealizD (iOS & Android): Track your screen time. The app monitors how many times a day you activate your phone and at what intervals. Use it to challenge yourself to stay off the phone for, say, 30 minutes. The app is available in English only.

In fact, one in five of us uses our smartphone during the night as well.

Source: *The SmartSleep Experiment, University of Copenhagen/Naja Hulvej Rod, 2018*



# Turn off notifications on your smartphone, tablet and computer

The little notifications popping up on your screen attract your attention, as do the e-mail and app icons that indicate how many unread messages you have.

The quality of work deteriorates when you are distracted and unable to concentrate and focus. An everyday life filled with distractions can lead to stress, as these constant interruptions delay tasks that require your focused attention. You may get the feeling of having worked on

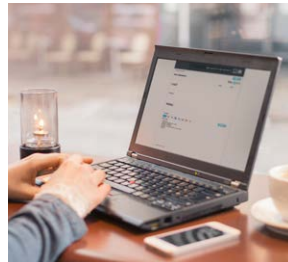
a task for several weeks without getting anywhere.

It can be helpful to turn off notifications and sounds, so that you actively decide when to check your e-mail or apps.

On your smartphone, you can choose only to allow notifications from a selected group of people who are allowed to contact you at all times.

It takes up to 20 minutes to recover your work flow if you are interrupted while performing a task that requires your full concentration.

Source: Survey conducted by Microsoft, USA in collaboration with the University of Illinois.



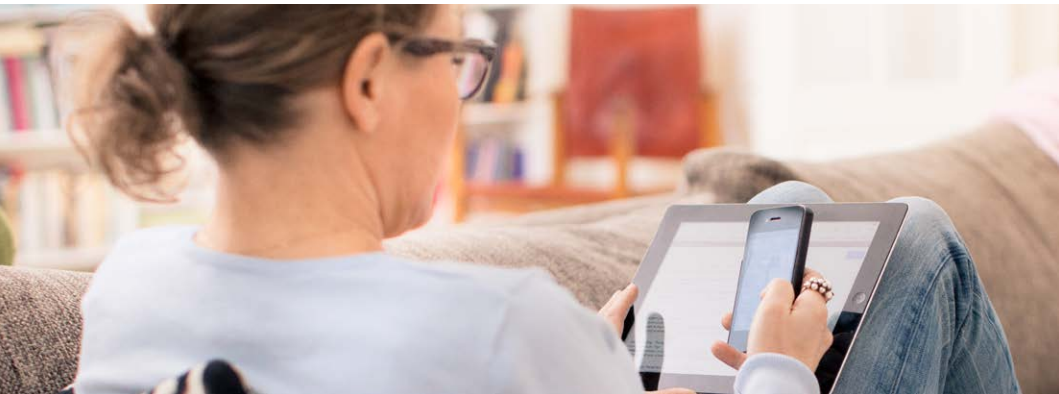
# *Adjust the start screen*

Adjust the start screen of your smartphone or tablet so that you only see the apps you need.

Time-consuming apps will then not be the first thing you see when you turn on your phone or tablet. Social media apps, instant messaging and similar

apps are designed in such a way that you can keep scrolling indefinitely without reaching the end. That is what makes them so time-consuming.

By moving these apps to the next screen of your phone or tablet, you allow yourself to consider whether you actually



need them before you reach them. This may make your smartphone less attractive to you.

When you eliminate these minor interruptions, the quality of your work is likely to improve, and you will find that your mental strength increases.



## Switch your smartphone or tablet to grayscale

Once you have picked it up, it can be challenging to put away your smartphone or tablet. The reason is that when you play a game or receive a notification, for example, your brain releases small shots of dopamine, which is similar to the brain processes triggered by nicotine or cocaine. This is part of the explanation behind smartphone addiction. If you want to make your screen less appealing, consider switching it to grayscale, so it is less fun and rewarding to look at.

A YouGov-survey conducted for Danica Pension in January 2019 indicates that 37% of respondents check their work e-mail outside normal business hours on a daily basis. In the survey, 54% of respondents state that they have not arranged with their employer if they are expected to reply to e-mails outside normal business hours.

One in four of us finds that our smartphone makes it difficult to draw a clear line between work life and private life.

*Source: YouGov-survey conducted for Danica Pension, January 2019.*





# *Arrange an agreement about availability*

Arrange with your employer at what times you are expected to be available outside normal business hours.

In a digital world where many can be reached 24/7, it is a good idea to arrange with your employer when your manager and colleagues may expect you to be available outside normal business hours, to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication.

Today, technology makes it possible to work any time and anywhere, and this has blurred the lines between work and leisure to many. It can be both physically

and mentally harmful if employer and employee fail to align their expectations of the employee's availability. Even if we are not contractually obliged to be available outside normal business hours, we often feel that we are expected to.

If, for example, your employer sends you an e-mail on Saturday afternoon, it is not always clear when you are expected to reply, and this can cause uncertainty.

# *Balance your screen time*

Try to balance your screen time when you perform tasks that require your full attention, for example by removing unnecessary distractions for specified periods of time, so that you can concentrate on your work.

For example, you could shut down your e-mail programme and switch your phone to silent mode while you immerse yourself in a task. This requires that you have agreed to do so with your employer and/or colleagues, of course.

As a result, you may leave the office feeling that you have achieved a lot within a very short timeframe. This will also reduce the feeling of being stressed by external sources.

*Disclaimer: Please note that the use of these tips depends on the model and operating system of your smartphone, tablet and computer.*



