

# Unplug...Then What?

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Hooray, it's the National Day of Unplugging! Once again, we've reached that special time of the year when a nice chunk of humanity pauses briefly, turns off our screens, and just embraces...what exactly?

Powering down your phone is easy. You hold a button for a few seconds and it turns off. But what happens next isn't always so simple. Unplugging is really just the first step. It creates a space, but if we don't fill that space, it can quickly become a void. Our devices may be necessities for work, or play, but a lot of the time they are stopgaps, plugging those inevitable gaps in our lives between destinations or conversations, with brightly lit distractions.

When you turn off your phone, the silence it instantly brings might arrive as a sort of monastic sense of calm, but it can also quickly turn to boredom. Few of us have the ability to instantly sink into the lotus position and meditate for twenty-four hours (and if you can, I'm guessing you're already a maven of unplugging). To embrace the benefits of a day unplugged you need to have a plan for how you will spend that time untethered from the world of 1's and 0's.

One way to approach this is to think about the things you love on your phone or computer, and then seek out the analog (ie: non-digital) versions of that. If you're a news junkie, go out and buy the fattest weekend newspaper you can find, spread it out on the couch, and read every single section with a giant pot of coffee. If you love playing video games, bring three to the nearest board game café, and learn to play at least two new games on cardboard. Love Instagram? Then buy (or borrow) an instant film camera, head to a neighborhood you've never been to before, and start snapping pictures.

For me, my unplugged Saturdays hold a few common analog elements. Coffee and some sort of baked good to start off, with a Bill Withers record spinning on the turntable. A chapter or two of a book I actually want to read. And as much time as possible spent outdoors. Sometimes it's a day of skiing or a hike in the woods, other times an afternoon at the playground with my kids, or a long, aimless walk, with nothing competing for my attention but whatever happens to cross my path.

Remember that unplugging isn't some test to endure for a day, like a fast. It is permission to indulge in a way of communicating, interacting, and relaxing with the tangible world that can be more rewarding, and enjoyable, than whatever you won't miss on your phone.

**David Sax** is a freelance writer specializing in business and food. His writing appears regularly in the *New York Times*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Saveur*, *The Grid Toronto*, and other publications. He is the author of *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and*

*the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen* and has won a James Beard Award for writing and literature. He lives in Toronto, Canada.