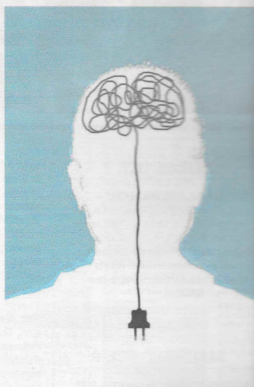
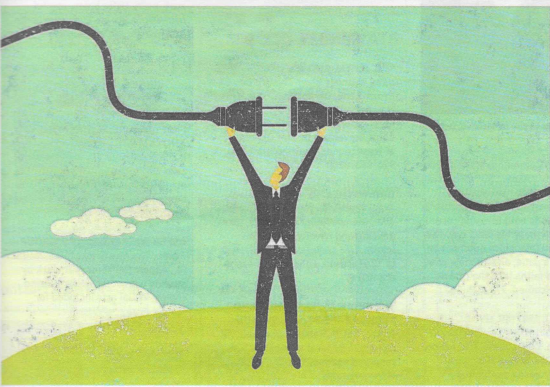


UNPLUG TO RECHARGE

BY AMANDA RAE

AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING WHY WE'RE USING IT AND WHEN.

—JESS DAVIS, FOUNDER OF FOLK REBELLION



At the Folk Rebellion Digital Detox Under the Aurora Borealis in Yellowknife, Canada, learn how to manage your technology and see the Northern Lights before it goes dark for a few decades. Build igloos, watch shooting stars from a hot tub, join a knitting circle, cross-country ski, take a nighttime photography workshop, play ice hockey, do yoga, journal, read, eat, drink, and be merry. Luxury accommodations and cold-weather gear (parkas, boots, neckwarmers, etc.) provided. \$250.

seekretreat.com/events/145



Before snowfall, visit True Nature Healing Arts in Carbondale to experience the stone reflexology walking path, peace garden of medicinal plants, and meditation maze, where one can disconnect for an hour or an entire afternoon. Free.

100 N. 3rd St., Carbondale, 970-963-9900
truenaturehealingarts.com



Book a night at one of 34 properties in the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association — the most extensive system in North America. The huts near Aspen, Leadville, Vail, Winter Park, and Crested Butte have few openings left for 2017, most midweek. Cell service is rare.

970-925-5775
huts.org



"Generally anybody who comes here is on some kind of digital detox," says Shambhala Mountain Center communications manager Ryan Stagg. There's no cell service at the 600-acre property in Red Feather, Colo., but two modern lodges do have wifi. Leave your devices in the car to remain fully present while hiking, exploring, or taking classes in yoga and meditation. Buddhist retreats are popular during off-season.

970-881-2184
shambhalamountain.org

break it out to beat boredom in public, according to Pew Research Center. How to beat tech obsession? Try a digital detox to clear your mind, free your hands, and connect with the people and places around you.

I WAS LOADING CAMPING GEAR into my car, moments before hitting the road, when the idea struck: What if I really, truly disconnected on this trip? It was Friday around noon, and I'd already set up an automated vacation responder indicating I wouldn't be checking email until Monday morning. That was easy. I notified my parents and key friends that my cell phone would be off for about 24 hours beginning Saturday at 5 p.m., when I was set to arrive at White Sand Dunes National Monument in southwestern New Mexico for an equinox full-moon yoga retreat. But could I abandon my phone entirely? Did I really need to go full blackout to clear my mind, anyway?

I found answers soon enough. Thinking it wise to print directions to my first stop in Santa Fe as backup to the oversized road atlas in my trunk — a relic from the 2011 road trip that landed me in Aspen, haven't used it since — I headed back to my apartment. While walking behind two maintenance men, I began to text my plan to a pal, fingers *tap, tap, tapping* the screen rapidly. When I stopped to put keys in the lock and looked up, it hit me: I was at the wrong door, wrong floor. I'd blindly followed those guys to the second story instead of the third. At least I didn't walk off a cliff playing Pokémon Go — that would have been really embarrassing.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY is king of the modern world, and we are a nation obsessed. According to a 2015 study by Deloitte, the average American adult looks at his or her phone 46 times every day, up from 33 views in 2014. For teens and millennials, who grew up with tech at their fingertips, literally, that jumps to more than 150 checks per day.

Media headlines suggest that the Internet, smartphones, cell phones, tablets, watches, apps, and games are ruining *everything*: our health, wellness, relationships, and cognitive function such as memory, attention span, critical thinking, and imagination. You or someone you know is suffering from weak sleep, vision problems, poor posture (docs agree unanimously that "tech neck" is an "epidemic"; tilting one's head just 15 degrees forward adds an extra 15 pounds of pressure). One out of four car accidents are attributed to texting while driving, which may be a low estimate as it's tough to prove.

"It's too much information, it's too overwhelming, and it creates anxiety," says Christina M. King, a licensed professional counselor in Aspen specializing in cognitive behavioral therapy. "It's becoming a crutch for families. It teaches our children: If bored, they get a screen. I don't think that's healthy."

Enter the digital detox — a break from technology that might look like a screen-free Sunday or a getaway designed to get you off-grid for multiple days. (Screen Free Week is May 1-7, 2017; screenfree.org.)

"I started feeling better on the eighth day — the fog lifted. My creativity, energy, and memory were coming back," says Jess Davis, founder of Folk Rebellion, a lifestyle brand that hosts digital detox retreats in New York, California, and Canada to "promote awareness and wellness around our

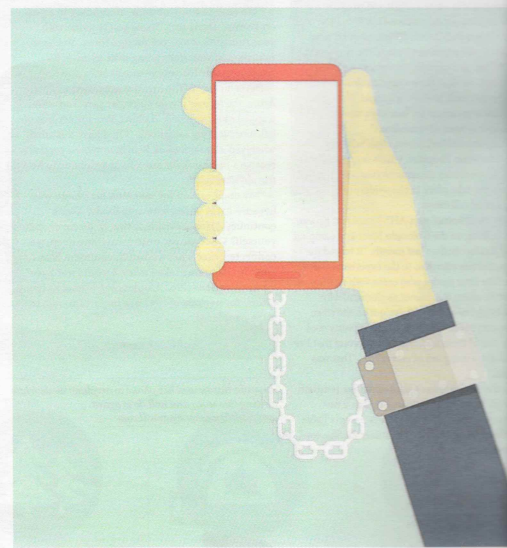
I TOOK COMMON KNOWING IN AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY. Studies suggest that technology separation anxiety — nomophobia — is a real phenomenon. "The tech check is tears, laughter, cheers," says Davis, who collects all electronic devices from participants during a ceremony at the start of each Folk Rebellion retreat. "It's important to set boundaries to our usage and to teach others to respect those boundaries, but we can't do that without awareness and understanding why we're using it and when."

In addition to outdoor adventure, Folk Rebellion trips include daily classes that "teach people tools on how to balance [tech] when they get back to the real world," Davis says. "When you remove the devices and don't have distractions, people's brains start to slow down a little bit — we get back to the traditional, biological, analog pace that is meant to be. You have time to immerse yourself in your surroundings."

That's the mission behind Aspen High School's Experiential Education Program, which sends students to more than 30 weeklong excursions every September. Half of the courses take place in the wilderness, conveniently out of cell range.

"I left my phone at home," says AHS senior Kat Kowar, 17, who went SUPing on the Colorado River and camping at Rancho del Rio for six days last month. "It forced me to really listen and pay attention to the experiences of other people. The river guides who came with us, they've chosen a lifestyle where they're not as electronically connected as everyone else — they're out on the river, doing backcountry tours — which I think is pretty cool. Almost every one of them said, 'I am most proud that I've been able to make a living out of recreation.' That was really powerful."

(Similarly, the Aspen Sister Cities exchange program requires its eighth-grade participants to sign a no-phone, no-computer contract that leaves parents liable for a \$1,000 fine if they break it. Organizer Jill Sheeley says incidents are rare.)



digital usage."

While the White Sand Dunes retreat with Albuquerque-based Yoga Simple Sacred wasn't categorized as digital detox, specifically, it made a fitting segue to that time in August when I found myself out of cell service at Burning Man for eight glorious days. So disconnected we were that Labor Day came and went without a single remark.

PAPER DIRECTIONS in hand, I shut my phone off and hit the road. A few miles out of town, though, I realized: The address of my AirBnB rental was on my phone. Ditto for the list of hot spots to check out, per Facebook friends' recommendations. Also I forgot a camera and a watch or a clock. Podcasts for the next 536 miles would be out, and I couldn't Shazam that catchy song to add to a Spotify playlist later. I meant to be in touch with a friend-of-a-friend in Taos — impossible sans phone — and I was borderline hungry with a very specific craving. How could I Google "best sandwich Buena Vista" now?

Screw all that, I thought. Without extreme planning, this journey would turn into a logistical

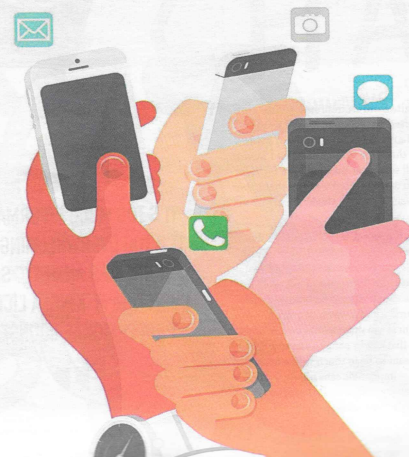
it a few hours. It was amcicut to retrain myself from turning the phone back on, but it forced me to talk to people and I was more in tune with road magic along the way. What I didn't miss: miscommunication via text message; feeling guilty for not picking up mom's call; deleting emails to kill time; autocorrect fails; selfie shame; rage toward Siri's inability to understand what I said.

"We used to think nothing of standing in a post office line," Davis says. "Now you're alone with your thoughts, it's a very foreign thing. We have information waterfalls going over us 24-7. It's uncomfortable for people to just be."

Davis included. The first time she tried a digital detox, the former digital strategist panicked while trapped in a small talk. "I didn't have my get-out-of-jail-free card, my cell phone, 'Oh, I have this email' or whatever," she says. (Folk Rebellion retreat participants receive a notebook the size of a smartphone to help with the physical void.)

"My main reason for touching my phone was because I was bored with somebody," Davis continues. "How horrible is that to discover about yourself? Once we got onto something deep, we connected over what we had in common. Had I not had my cell phone taken away, I would not have made this friendship...Unplugging events or being offline for periods of time are important, just to wake people up."

Amanda Rae turned her phone to airplane mode while writing this story and will do it again. amandaraeaswhere@gmail.com



"IT'S TOO MUCH INFORMATION. IT'S TOO OVERWHELMING. IT CREATES ANXIETY," SAYS CHRISTINA M. KING, A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

SCREEN SAVERS

"Going into the holiday season, time [to unplug], because people you love most," says founder of lifestyle brand and a Wanderlust Snowman Start a digital detox at home

—Try it on a Sunday. "No looking at anything, like Spotify to walk and find a newspaper"

—Shout your intention. Put it on Facebook and tell mom, boss, best friends. hear from you for 24, 48 sending authorities to you for you."

—Consider: What did I before scrolling existing? Projects! Games! Reading your time is mostly spent remove [those], add things picked Battleship for my sit across from each other hands. It's a great first-

—Build an 'Unplug Box' ritual. Set rules around your phone. Devices during meals, etc. "We shoebox decorated as a finding Davis' young son to feed the monster!"

—Make it a game. At a stack phones in the middle first person to touch a check. "I got stuck with a time," Davis says. "You

—Buy an alarm clock. phone next to your head the bright glow, you'll