

# Limiting Exposure to News to Improve Your Mood

## Objective

To limit the amount of news you consume each day to improve your overall mood and your outlook on life.

## You Should Know

Now more than ever you might feel you need to know what is going on in the world. It is important to stay informed, but the news never stops. Whether you are receiving notifications on your phone, watching a 24-hour news channel, or scrolling through Twitter, you might be constantly exposed to the latest-breaking news. You might find yourself compulsively watching the news or checking your social media feed.

When you click on a shocking headline, there is always something new and scary to increase your anxiety, ramp up your stress, and inflame your anger. The toll the constant barrage of news updates has on your mental health is significant.

Is it possible to escape the news to preserve your well-being? The simple solution might seem obvious – avoid watching the news 24/7 and find positive things to focus on instead. However, that can be easier said than done.

News outlets and social media platforms want to keep you hooked and try hard to convince you that focusing on breaking news is critical, pulling you in through the use of powerful marketing techniques. Media outlets compete with one another for your attention, and they take advantage of a phenomenon called “negativity bias” because the human brain cannot help but focus on the negative. Words like “pandemic” or “crisis” get your immediate attention because your survival instinct is triggered. Yet, for the sake of your mental health, it is important to limit your exposure.

This worksheet will help you limit the amount of news you consume each day to improve your mood and decrease stress.

Here are some suggestions for ways to limit your news consumption.

**1. Turn off notifications.** Even if you are unable to completely disconnect, start to limit your news consumption. Turn off push notifications for all phone apps. You might not realize just how many apps have your permission to disrupt your life – including major news outlets, Twitter, Facebook, and so on. So, stop giving your attention to the headlines by removing those permissions.

**2. Designate “no-news” times.** You do not require a constant stream of information to stay informed. Check in only during specific times of day. Also, try not to consume news right before bed or first thing in the morning.

**3. Seek out the positive.** The frequency of news alerts is one issue, but just as important is the content. Reflect on the types of content you are consuming, and begin to choose more positive information. Purposefully seek out news that will inspire you. Uplifting content about acts of kindness or stories about regular people or animals provide a positive way to begin your day. When you focus on the good, your mood will improve. Kindly and tactfully shut down people around you who focus on negative news.

**4. Turn it all off.** If you are going through a difficult time or feeling especially stressed, you might need to do a bit more than usual to support yourself. Take a step back from what is happening in the world and focus on your well-being. If updates and alerts are adding to your upset, turn it all off because you *will* survive without television, radio, social media, and news websites. Use this break to focus on self-care: exercise, meditate, or read an uplifting book. Just avoid checking the news until you are in a better place.

### **What to Do**

For one week, limit the amount of news you consume. In the chart that follows, describe what action you take (for example, shutting off phone notifications, designating “no news times,” or engaging in other activities other than scrolling through social media). At the end of the day, describe how you feel. Finally, rate your mood from 1 to 10, where 1 = I feel very stressed or anxious, to 10 = I feel calm, happy, and at peace.

| Date | Action(s) to limit news consumption | At the end of the day,<br>how do you feel? | Rate your mood<br>(1-10) |
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### Reflections on This Exercise

What did you find most difficult or challenging about limiting your news exposure and consumption?

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What did you find most helpful about limiting your news consumption?

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Did you find your mood improved once you limited your news consumption each day? Describe.

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What else can you do to reduce your news consumption?

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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