

Setting Healthy Boundaries with Media Consumption

Objective

To develop healthier media consumption habits, reduce anxiety, and improve your overall well-being.

What to Know

The constant flow of news and social media updates, especially during an election year, can contribute to anxiety and stress. It is essential to recognize the impact that media consumption can have on your mental well-being. This worksheet is designed to help you establish healthy boundaries with media consumption, limit news and social media exposure, and discover reliable and balanced news sources. By implementing these strategies, you can manage your anxiety, reduce stress, and maintain a healthier relationship with all forms of media.

1. Limit News and Social Media Exposure

- Spend five minutes at the end of each day noting the amount of time you spent on news and social media.
- Allocate a specific amount of time for news and social media consumption (e.g., 30 minutes max each day).
- Adhere to this limit and use an alarm or timer to help you stay on track.
- Determine two specific times each day to check news updates and social media (e.g., 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening). Stick to these times to avoid random, anxiety-inducing consumption.
- At the end of the week, identify patterns in your media consumption and related emotional responses.
- Reflect on how your set limits and schedule worked for you and if any adjustments are needed.

2. Establish Specific Times for News Updates

- Check the news and social media only at the predetermined times.
- Avoid impulsively checking your phone or computer for updates outside of these times.
- During times when you might typically consume media, engage in alternative activities you enjoy. For instance, you might read a book, take a walk, or practice a hobby.
- Reflect on whether the alternative activities helped reduce your anxiety and plan to incorporate them regularly.

3. Engage with Reliable and Balanced News Sources.

- Spend a few minutes each day checking the reliability of your current news sources. Use fact-checking websites and consider the source's transparency and balance. Phase out unreliable sources.
- Turn off non-essential news alerts on your phone and other devices. Set alerts only for critical updates from reliable sources.

Review your log at the end of the week and answer the following questions.

On average, how much time are you spending on news and social media each day?

How does your media consumption affect your mood and anxiety levels? Explain.

Are there specific times or platforms that trigger more anxiety? Why?

Now, set a daily limit for news and social media consumption. Aim for a manageable and realistic amount of time, such as 15 minutes to 1 hour. Decide specific times of day when you will check the news or social media. For example, you might choose to check news updates in the morning and evening for 10 minutes. Write down your media schedule and post it somewhere visible.

Media Schedule Example

Morning News Check: 7:30 - 7:45 a.m.

Evening News Check: 6:00 - 6:15 p.m.

Social Media: 8:00 - 8:20 p.m.

Platform	Time

List alternative activities you can engage in instead of consuming media. These activities should be enjoyable and relaxing, such as reading a book, going for a walk, or spending time with loved ones.

Integrate these activities into your daily routine, particularly during times when you would typically consume news or social media.

Daily Routine Example

Morning: Yoga (7:00 - 7:30 a.m.), News Check (7:30 - 7:45 a.m.)

Afternoon: Gardening (4:00 - 4:30 p.m.)

Evening: News Check (6:00 - 6:15 p.m.), Dinner with Family (6:30-7:15 p.m.), Reading (8:00 - 8:30 p.m.)

Activity	Time

List the news sources you currently use and evaluate their reliability and bias. Consider factors such as journalistic standards, transparency, and diversity of perspectives. Note the examples below.

News Source	Reliability	Bias
<i>BBC</i> <i>X (Twitter)</i>	<i>High</i> <i>Variable</i>	<i>Neutral</i> <i>Variable</i>

Research and identify news sources known for their reliability and balanced reporting and write them below. Try to include a mix of perspectives in your media diet. Here are some reliable news sources examples:

- BBC
- NPR
- Reuters
- Associated Press

- Subscribe to newsletters or follow social media accounts from the reliable sources you identified. Ensure you have a balanced mix of perspectives.
- Use news alert apps or features to receive updates on specific topics of interest rather than constantly breaking news. This can help reduce feelings of overwhelm.

At the end of the week, reflect on the following questions.

How has limiting news and social media exposure impacted your stress and anxiety levels?

Are there any adjustments you need to make to your media schedule? Be specific.

How has choosing reliable and balanced news sources affected your perception of current events? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did anything surprise you about this activity? If so, describe.

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

What did you learn from this exercise?
