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A GUIDE TO ENDING
TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION

By Anna Brennan

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THE WHY

HI, I'M ANNA!
THIS IS MY STORY...

Our journey into the world of technology and social media often begins quite naturally, influenced by the examples set by older siblings, parents, and peers. Before I got my first iPhone at the age of 12 (pictured to your right), it seemed like everyone I knew had a phone. I watched my friends join social media one after another until it became an abundant presence in almost every life around me. In the beginning, I thought this was a beautiful thing. I found myself drawn to the creative freedom they enjoyed, capturing moments through photos and videos and sharing them with the world. Just before my 12th birthday, however, I had a realization. I was losing my friends to these devices. Whether it was social media that was swallowing them whole or technology in general, I witnessed how technology had a profound affect on my peers. When the day came for me to receive my first device, I decided that I did not want to let that happen to me. Nevertheless, I created my own Instagram account and began falling into the trap. The sense of belonging and connection it initially brought was exhilarating. However, as the year 2020 unfolded and the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, everything changed. The closure of schools and the shift to remote learning abruptly altered the landscape of my social interaction.

Despite having a sizable following online, I began to realize that the relationships I had cultivated in the non-physical world were not as substantial as I had once thought. The virtual connections paled in comparison to the warmth and authenticity of real-life friendships. Moreover, as days turned into weeks and months of confinement, I found myself increasingly tethered to my screen. The endless scrolling and constant exposure to curated images and posts only served to exacerbate feelings of isolation and inadequacy. What had once felt like a source of joy and connection now seemed to deepen the void I felt within. In retrospect, the allure of social media had masked a deeper longing for genuine human connection, a longing that became more pronounced in the face of the unprecedented challenges of 2020.

Recognizing the suffocating hold that social media and my phone had on me was a pivotal moment. It seemed as though I couldn't take a step without feeling the weight of their influence. Even the simple act of leaving my room was clouded by the nagging worry of not having my phone close at hand...

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THE WHY

CONTINUED...

Fed up with this dependency on my device, especially during lockdown, I made a conscious decision to reclaim control. Setting clear goals became a beacon of hope amid the chaos for me. I embarked on a journey of self-discovery, determined to break free from the subtle yet powerful grip that my trusty iPhone 8 had over me. It wasn't an easy path, requiring perseverance, self-actualization, and a willingness to challenge my own habits and sentiments.

Over the course of well over a year, I painstakingly crafted new routines and established firm boundaries for myself. Each day presented its own set of challenges, but I remained steadfast in my commitment to change. Gradually, I began to feel the grip loosen, and a newfound sense of freedom emerged.

Finally feeling in control of myself, I was abruptly reminded that this issue was much bigger than my own journey. On August 2nd, 2023, I was mere feet away from death as I was struck in my vehicle at a highway intersection by a man who ran a red light because he was on his phone while operating his vehicle. This was the scariest moment of my life, but I am grateful for the things it taught me.

Earlier that year I started an anti-technology campaign called "SHI: The Social Health Initiative" where I started to speak out about my experience with technology addiction. Through YouTube videos and Instagram posts, I was working to help people break away from their social media accounts to live a happier life and protect their mental health. I even shared a few posts about how social media use could lead to distracted driving accidents -- which I now view as highly ironic. After the accident, I realized that there is an even greater need than I realized for resources related to technology addiction.

Social media provides an incredible platform for connection that is undeniably essential in our evolving society, but it is costing the health and well-being of users across all demographics. It is my belief now as a self-proclaimed "anti-technology" individual that though we may never go back to living truly free from technology, we can learn to better use it. My mission through SHI now is not to scare people away from technology and social media, but rather to give them the tools they need to use these platforms to their benefit.

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This transformation isn't just about breaking free from technology; it is about rediscovering yourself and reclaiming your autonomy. I had seen social media affecting those around me for years, but the problem didn't become clear to me until I broke free from the tribulations myself and experienced the extreme effects of it. My journey is still developing, but the rewards have been immeasurable. I feel blessed to have found this newfound freedom as it has ignited a fire within me to share this journey.

Understanding the importance of breaking reliance on personal devices has become a cornerstone of my mission. These gadgets, while convenient, shouldn't dictate our lives or define our sense of self-worth. They won't always be there, and relying too heavily on them can lead to a loss of genuine connection and fulfillment, as well as aid in the development of many mental health diagnoses.

This is why I have poured my heart and soul into crafting this eBook that delves into the depths of my journey. It's a treasure trove of insights, strategies, and actionable steps designed to help you break free from the clutches of technology addiction, no matter how deeply ingrained your habits may seem.

"If SHI CAN, you CAN," is the message of empowerment that underpins this journey. Together, let's embark on a transformative adventure by diving into the pages of "SHI CAN!" as we rewrite our relationship with technology, one click at a time.

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CHAPTER I

Salvage Your Socials

One of the main reasons we are all so attached to our phones is social media. Because of this, it will be your biggest obstacle in relinquishing your technology addiction. The first thing you need to know about social media is that it is NOT a bad thing, it all depends on how you choose to use it. In this chapter, you will learn how to re-vamp your social media usage to benefit you rather than hurt you through a detailed explanation of the LIKE model. It's time to salvage your socials.

Less is More

Let's begin by analyzing what social platforms you use, and how they may be impacting you. From SnapChat to BeReal and Tik Tok, there is no denying that some platforms are more harmful than others. You should choose no more than three to manage at a time in order to help your brain focus on getting the most out of each platform you engage with. Cutting down on social apps should immediately improve your screen time as you will have less to scroll through and check each day. Use this platform rating scale to help you decide which platforms to keep or cut:

It makes me generally feel good.	1pt
I feel creative while engaging.	1pt
I never feel anxious about it.	1pt
I rarely spend > 1 hour on it.	1pt
I never use it while driving.	1pt
I don't feel pressured to use it.	1pt

(High scoring platforms are keepers!)

Here is an **example** list of common social apps on the shi. scale:

Pinterest 6/6

LinkedIn 5/6

YouTube 5/6

Facebook 4/6

Instagram 4/6

X 3/6

BeReal 2/6

Tik Tok 1/6

SnapChat 0/6

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The SHI scale is a point Likert scale designed to ask questions about the apps you use. It highlights what healthy app usage looks like and makes you think about how an app is truly affecting you. Things such as how the apps make you feel, when and how you are using it, and any dangerous habits it may incite are all taken into consideration. It is by no means a clinical scale, it is simply meant to help you evaluate and understand how different apps are affecting you. What you do with your findings is completely up to you, but keeping your top 3 highest scoring apps on your phone is the best way to go. Let go of the rest for a while! And, because it is easier said than done, you're probably wanting some tips on how to go about quitting specific apps. Well, *keep reading*!

So, you've decided it's time to quit, but you don't know how to go about doing so. First of all, I've been there. I understand how it feels to want to throw your phone away while knowing you can't because people will quite honestly think you disappeared. It is frankly frustrating, but I am here to guide you through it. We need to begin by recognizing that we will be giving up an amount of social security. Leaving apps that you have relied on as forms of communication is no easy task, so, let's be smart about this. Here are some quitting tips that will help you ease into the process....

Instagram 4/6
- Share your phone number with people you talk with in DM's
- Add 'signed off' to your bio
- Keep an album in your phone of photos you want to share when you return

YouTube 5/6
- Use YouTube.com if you need to look up a video
- Try starting a new TV series or book when you have spare time
- Turn off your account's email notifications

SnapChat 0/6
- Share your phone number with the people you talk to most
- Remind yourself that a snap score does not mean anything!
- Let your friends know you will be inactive

Tik Tok 1/6
- Share Tik Tok style videos on apps like Instagram instead
- Add "signed off" to your bio
- Let your friends know you will be away so they can help hold you accountable

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As you can see, there are a few common themes in the realm of taking the first steps to ending your addiction to a social app. It starts with looking for alternatives, and then from there, it is essential to spread the word and have things in place to hold you accountable. I have found that telling friends or family is the best way to do this, because not only are you helping your own journey, but you are also planting the seed in their minds that they can try it too. Now that you have achieved "Less is More", let's move on…

Implement Control

Social media platforms wield an unprecedented level of influence over our lives, largely due to the intricate algorithms that govern content distribution. These algorithms, meticulously crafted by tech companies, prioritize engagement and user retention above all else. Consequently, our experience on these platforms becomes a maze of personalized content, carefully tailored to capture and maintain our attention. Yet, this tailored content often leads to echo chambers, reinforcing our existing beliefs and isolating us from diverse perspectives. Moreover, the addictive nature of these algorithms subtly manipulates our behaviors, compelling us to spend more time scrolling and interacting, even when we may have intended otherwise. In essence, our lack of control over social media stems from the deliberate design of algorithms that prioritize profit and engagement over user autonomy, leaving us unwitting participants in a digital ecosystem where our choices are subtly influenced at every turn.

Instead of allowing this consumer culture to happen to us, we can fight back and take back control by defining our purpose on the social platforms we use. It takes time and determination, and even I still struggle with this step from time to time, but it is so worth it. Taking back control puts you in charge of what you see on social media, not the algorithms. They are AI, you are a human being. You deserve to have the control.

So that all makes sense, now we have to explore exactly how to take back control. My three greatest tips for you are as follows:
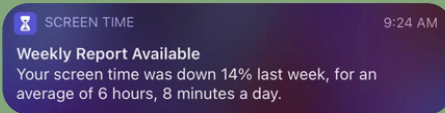
- **Define** for yourself why you use social media. My three purposes are to be entertained, informed, and updated on people's lives…you can steal these if you'd like!
- **Filter** through your entire following list and ask yourself if each individual account fits into one of your categories. Unfollow anyone who does not leave you feeling inspired and do NOT feel bad about it!
- **Evaluate** yourself when you are on social media once you have defined your purpose and curated your feed. Are you intentionally engaging with your purpose in mind? Keep yourself off of explore pages and you are good to go.

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Identifying one's purpose for using social media is crucial in navigating its vast landscape effectively. Clarifying your intent will immediately help streamline your interactions and manage your time more efficiently. Understanding your purpose allows you to establish boundaries, ensuring that social media enriches rather than detracts from your life. By doing this, you implement your control over the algorithms, aligning your usage with your goals and values, allowing you to mitigate the negative effects of algorithmic manipulation and maintain autonomy and control over your online experience. Not only will it reap these many benefits but it will also save you so much precious time.
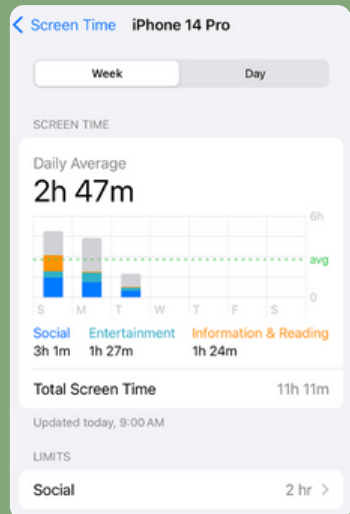
Kick the Clock

SCREEN TIME   9:24 AM
Weekly Report Available
Your screen time was down 14% last week, for an average of 6 hours, 8 minutes a day.
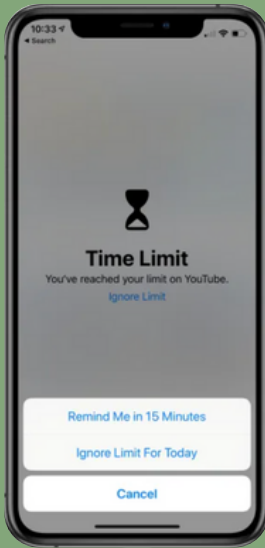
look familiar?

Now that we have established how we want to go about using our social media, we are all set, right? The answer, sadly, is no. No one is perfect, and so we need to take as many precautions as possible in place to hold ourselves accountable. What is the most convincing way to accomplish this? The answer to that question is keeping track of how much time we are spending on our phones.

Tracking our screen time is essential for maintaining a healthy balance between our digital lives and real-world experiences. By monitoring the amount of time we spend on screens, we gain valuable insights into our habits and behaviors. This awareness allows us to identify patterns of excessive usage and take proactive steps to limit our screen time if necessary. Tracking screen time fosters mindfulness, encouraging us to be more intentional about how we allocate our time and attention. Ultimately, by understanding and managing our screen time, we can cultivate healthier relationships with technology, prioritize meaningful activities, and nurture our overall well-being. Let's learn how to kick the clock!

‹ Screen Time   **iPhone 14 Pro**

| Week | Day |

SCREEN TIME

Daily Average
2h 47m

| Social | Entertainment | Information & Reading |
| 3h 1m | 1h 27m | 1h 24m |

| Total Screen Time | 11h 11m |

Updated today, 9:00 AM

LIMITS

| Social | 2 hr › |

1. **Set app limits**
2. **That's it...that's all you have to do**

Yes, you read that right. The only step that is necessary to take to kick the clock is setting time limits and making sure your screen time is on. If you are not an Apple user, consider exploring if your smart phone has its own version of screen time limits. The Apple App Limit feature is rooted in principles of behavioral psychology, particularly in the concept of self-regulation and impulse control. This feature leverages the understanding that humans have limited willpower and are susceptible to the lure of digital distractions. The feature operates on the basis of the pre-commitment strategy, a behavioral technique where individuals make decisions in advance to control their future behavior. By proactively setting the recommended 15-minute interval limits on apps, you are committing to reducing the likelihood of impulsive and prolonged engagement with digital content.

Embrace Disconnection

Last on the LIKE agenda is embracing disconnection. This is by far the hardest to do, but it is also by far the most beneficial. Disconnecting from technology is crucial for several reasons, but primarily for our mental and physical well-being:

1. **Mental Health**: Continuous exposure to screens and digital stimuli can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. Taking breaks from technology allows our minds to rest and recharge, reducing stress levels and promoting overall mental well-being.

2. **Physical Health**: Excessive screen time often leads to sedentary behavior, which is associated with various health problems like obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and musculoskeletal issues. Disconnecting from technology encourages physical activity and helps prevent the negative health consequences of prolonged sitting and screen use.

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3. **Social Connections**: While technology can facilitate communication and connection, excessive reliance on digital interactions can erode the quality of our face-to-face relationships. Disconnecting from technology allows us to engage more fully with those around us, fostering deeper connections and meaningful interactions.

4. **Creativity and Productivity**: Constant digital stimulation can stifle creativity and hinder productivity. Taking breaks from technology provides opportunities for reflection, boredom, and daydreaming, which are essential for fostering creativity and innovation.

5. **Mindfulness and Presence:** Technology often pulls our attention in multiple directions, making it challenging to be fully present in the moment. This can make simple everyday tasks like driving a car a much less surmountable task. Disconnecting allows us to cultivate mindfulness, focusing on the here and now without distractions, and fostering a deeper appreciation for our surroundings and experiences.

Disconnecting from technology periodically is vital for maintaining a healthy balance in our lives, promoting mental and physical well-being, nurturing relationships, fostering creativity, and cultivating mindfulness and presence. Let's now learn how we can establish boundaries in our routines so we can reap the benefits of technology while mitigating its negative impacts.

The Glovebox Challenge

This practice challenges drivers to place their phone in a center console compartment or glovebox every time they are on the road to eliminate distracted driving habits such as checking your phone at stoplights and snapping while driving

Vacation Disconnection

Deleting social media apps while on vacation is one of the most refreshing feelings. When you are on vacation, enjoy your surroundings instead of your screen. Taking just a week away from your socials is enough to positively reset your system.

Designated Phone Free Time

One of the easiest ways to work disconnection into your routine is by setting designated times throughout your day to put away your device. A common practice is limiting screen time before and after bed, or during meal times.

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CONGRATULATIONS!

You have successfully taken the first steps in the right direction towards breaking your technology addiction. I encourage you to take a few weeks to let this first round of information sink in before coming back, ready to embrace more. We have only just begun to scratch the surface of what is possible. As you use your technology moving forward, remember the importance of the LIKE model.

LESS IS MORE.

IMPLEMENT CONTROL

KICK THE CLOCK

EMBRACE DISCONNECTION

TO BE CONTINUED...

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