

## Millennials cut back on screen time while working from home

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A few weeks into the lockdown, Arpita Patkar, 28, disabled her Instagram account. It was a measure to reclaim her time and reduce the hours spent on phone. The turning point came when she spent seven hours scrolling through her feed one day. "I was shocked I had wasted that much time on the app," says the Mumbai-based senior manager with an experiential marketing company. She has been using the "saved time" to learn French, work out and listen to music.

From buying alarm clocks to deleting apps from phones, millennials are looking for ways to reduce their screen time after realizing that they were spending more screen time, toggling between the laptop, TV, Kindle, phone and tablet. Now, they are trying to create healthy boundaries while working from home, since hours at the makeshift desks seem to stretch on. Staying home also meant more time on social media.

Amit Joshi, 44, chief investment officer, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, found himself reaching for the phone more often after the lockdown. Eventually, he created a routine with physical activity and reading to avoid picking up a device at certain times of the day. "Friends and colleagues are spending more time on their phones over the last three months. I think it's because they don't have anything else to occupy time," says Pune-based Joshi, who switches off his data from 10.30pm to 5.30am.

The lockdown coupled with 24x7 internet access has led to higher screen time across age groups. "Browsing is now a lei-



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sure activity. Many are on their phones when they are bored or lonely," says Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma, professor of clinical psychology, and head, service for healthy use of technology clinic, NIMHANS, Bengaluru. "People rationalize it saying things will go back to normal soon and they will have structure. So they're not concerned about excessive usage." He says it is important to create spaces where you don't use the phone—an hour with family, or going for a walk outdoors.

And, it's not just adults, a study by Olx India found that 54% of children were spending five hours more than the usual screen time after the lockdown.

In the UK, 83% parents said children's screen time increased after the covid-19 outbreak.

Delhi resident and freelance HR consultant Ritu Sethi, 32, started monitoring her phone use when she realized her son, 4, might mimic her. "Initially, I would pick up the phone to check messages or social media updates all the time. I have even bought an alarm clock so that I don't need my phone to check the time," says Sethi. "After 7pm, unless it's an emergency, I don't respond to mails, and people have learned to respect my time."

