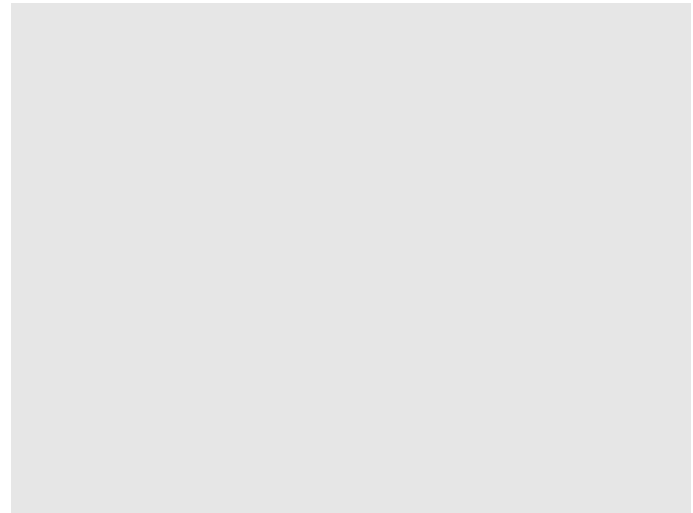


School is in full swing and the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1! This is one of the best times of the year to reflect and set new and healthy goals.

As we all know, the internet, and social media specifically, is a double-edged sword. It has become increasingly apparent that excessive use and misuse of social media is a real threat to public health. The use of smartphones has only exacerbated the

problem. Hate scrolling and trolling is sadly common. As United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy reported recently in a health advisory released May 23, our young people are suffering the greatest harm from online bullying, shaming, comparison, etc. And what they are learning, they are learning from adults.

Take a moment to seriously consider your online behavior this fiscal year and modify it as necessary. If you have a problematic relationship with digital media, consider these self-interventions:



Amber Johnson

Photo provided

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1. Take a 30-day break from social media. (For your mental health, or the health of your children, maybe you need to ditch it permanently.)

2. Don't react to haters with more hate or anger; take a deep breath and move on; the trolls feed off negative attention.
3. Take perspective; walk in someone else's shoes; ask clarifying questions. Is there any benefit to constant outrage?
4. When necessary, privately message someone if you need to hash out your differences. Better yet
5. Have the courage to initiate a phone call or a sit-down, face-to-face conversation with someone you disagree with.
6. Enjoy a phone-free dinner with family or friends.
7. Leave your phone at home and take a walk in the mountains.

The milk of human kindness is powerful medicine. Be kind to one another and listen to one another, even if you cannot agree with one another. Let us not hide behind our screens, flinging digital poo back and forth with family, friends and strangers on the internet. Let us not get lost in that world. Exist in the real world, be good to one another, and have courageous conversions in person or over the phone. We need to do better for both ourselves and our kids. Put down the phone and hold tight to the people you love today.

Amber Johnson is the communications specialist for Lewis and Clark Public Health.

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