



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by Evolution of Benefits



THE DANGERS OF DOOMSCROLLING

During times of uncertainty or stress, you might find yourself scrolling through your phone, unable to stop consuming negative news and social media content. Although this habit, known as doomscrolling, is common, it can be harmful to your physical and mental health.

This article explains the dangers of doomscrolling and provides tips for reducing this behavior.

What Is Doomscrolling?

Doomscrolling is the tendency to binge excessive amounts of news, particularly negative news such as disasters, wars, tragedies and other distressing information. You may do it unconsciously, and it's often difficult to stop.

Studies show that doomscrolling releases small amounts of dopamine, a brain chemical associated with feelings of pleasure and reward. These dopamine hits prompt you to continue consuming negative content, leading to a cycle that's hard to break. Over time, this habit can increase feelings of anxiety, stress and helplessness, making it more difficult to disengage.

Experts from Harvard Medical School say doomscrolling became widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic as many people followed coronavirus updates. Years later, ongoing social, political and economic turmoil continues to fuel this habit for many. Doomscrolling has emerged as a threat to individuals' minds and bodies.

How Doomscrolling Affects Your Mind and Body

Doomscrolling can take a toll on your physical and mental well-being. If left unmanaged, this habit can lead to physical symptoms, such as:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Reduced appetite
- Elevated blood pressure

Additionally, doomscrolling can have adverse effects on your mental health. It has been linked to pessimism, difficulty concentrating and mental fatigue. Research indicates that regularly taking in negative news can lead to higher levels of depression and anxiety and may increase feelings of fear and sadness. Long hours of doomscrolling, especially at night, can delay sleep and affect sleep quality. Doomscrolling may also worsen mental health issues. For people who already experience anxiety and depression, doomscrolling can intensify symptoms by fueling worry, hopelessness and a sense of being overwhelmed.



How to Cut Back on Doomscrolling

The news cycle remains filled with natural disasters, economic uncertainty and other negative events. While you can't stop the constant stream of upsetting news, you can control your exposure to it. Consider the following strategies to help you break away from the habit of doomscrolling:

- **Limit your screen time.** Use your device's built-in tools or a third-party app to set time limits on usage. Reducing your daily time on an app can help you be mindful of your screen habits and support healthier boundaries for how much time you spend online.
- **Curate your news feeds.** Make it difficult to access negative information or overwhelming content by unfollowing certain accounts or deleting apps. Follow reliable sources and positive accounts that can help you stay informed without making you feel anxious.
- **Move your body.** Exercise helps decrease stress hormones, naturally boosting your mood and energy. It can also help shift your focus to something positive and reduce the urge to constantly check your phone.
- **Focus on the positive.** You can't control the future, but you can take charge of your current situation and be optimistic. Small steps like volunteering, donating to a cause or contacting an elected official can help you feel more empowered.
- **Incorporate self-care.** Self-care practices, such as deep breathing and walking, can help ground you and bring your focus back to the present. In general, self-care is a healthy coping mechanism.
- **Declutter your space.** Organizing your work or living space can help take your mind off of negative thoughts and can help you feel more in control. A clean, tidy environment also makes it easier to focus on healthier habits and activities.
- **Seek support.** Your loved ones can be a great source of support when you're overwhelmed by

negative news. Connecting with them through calls or short meetups can significantly improve your emotional and mental well-being.

Conclusion

Consuming a constant stream of negative news without pausing can be detrimental to your mental and physical health. It's important to cut back on doomscrolling to give your mind a break and be more present in your life. This helps make room for meaningful connections and activities that can lead you to a more hopeful outlook.

If you or a loved one is having difficulty breaking the doomscrolling habit, consider reaching out to a health care professional who can offer guidance and support.