



Communities + Generations + Innovations

Ten Coping Strategies for older Oregonians during COVID-19



Make Screen Time Rewarding

Okay, let's admit that everybody is struggling with the easy distraction of screens. They are everywhere. They offer instant distraction as well as valuable information. They are a connection to the world outside, always available from television to iPads. Yet we know how one news tease leads to another, every click takes you down a rabbit hole, the next episode will start before you can get a drink.

Too much time on screens drags us down: mentally, we feel anxious, angry, depressed, guilty and generally dissatisfied. Physically, we feel stiff and lethargic.

What we do -- or don't do -- with our bodies influences our mind. Screens interfere with regular exercise, adequate sleep, and healthy eating habits and these combine to both physical and mental health problems.

Consider two ways to take control of your relationship with screens: 1. Improve what you do and see online. 2. Limit the overall amount of time you spend staring at screens.

What do we mean by "improve?" Leaving room for our differences, most people feel happier when they engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable. Hollywood and Silicon Valley are masters of delivering enjoyable, but are generally terrible at significance. That part is up to us.

Of course in the beginning, the effort to find enjoyable and significant viewing, means you will probably need to spend MORE time on screens. You may have to learn new things. If you feel overwhelmed by technology or how to find things online, here are some suggestions:

Start here: [Common Sense Media](#), the leading source of entertainment and technology recommendations for families. Every day, millions of parents and educators trust Common Sense reviews and advice to help them navigate the digital world. Common Sense Media is also available in [Spanish](#).

Books

There is now access to 60,000 free eBooks. Everything from [Project Gutenberg](#) is gratis, libre, and completely without cost to readers. Now may be the time to re-read that classic you remember from childhood.

[Audible](#), a high quality audiobook library is offering free access to hundreds of books.

New Skills

[Skill Share](#) is an excellent site to explore new skills, deepen existing passions and get lost in creativity with these short, free classes

[Oregon State's master gardening class](#) is available online and has waived the usual \$45 fee.

Language learning

[Duolingo](#) is a talk and listen app with dozens of languages to try!

News and science

[The Learning Network](#) is like an online newspaper with ripped-from-the-headlines news and current events and help for understanding our world. The coronavirus outbreak might be the biggest historical event of your life. What can you learn from it?

Back to School

Did you know you can virtually join classes from great universities?

- <https://oyc.yale.edu/>
- <https://www.edx.org/>
- <http://www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses>

Music

[The Smithsonian's](#) combined musical resources constitute the world's largest museum of music. [This site](#), created for the 2019 Year of Music, taps into the Smithsonian's bounty of educational resources, music videos, collection spotlights and more.

Mindfulness and Mood

[UCLA Mindful App](#) is a mindfulness app based on university research. The app features about a dozen meditations of different types in English and Spanish. You can learn to focus on your breath, your body, or sounds; work with difficult emotions; and cultivate loving-kindness in sessions ranging from 3 to 19 minutes long.

Increase your happiness and productive habits with the most popular class at [Yale University](#).

Strict by day, more relaxed at night

Creating "no screen" blocks of time will free you and create time from thin air. Use your daily routine to guide and enforce the whats and whens of screens. Stick to your plan.

As the often long awaited evening comes on, allow yourself more leeway. Now's the time for Netflix. Watch a movie with some popcorn. Share a movie online. But be strict about ending screen time. Again, lean on your schedule. Set a time to turn off the iPad and phone at least a half an hour before bedtime.