



TRADING SCREEN TIME FOR GREEN TIME

By Meghan Koransky

Does scrolling through emails, messages, and social media feeds leave you feeling tired, anxious, and distracted? Do you find yourself multitasking using different devices? Do you ever check emails when you are in traffic, at the movies, or on the toilet?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are not alone. The average adult in the U.S. spends several hours a day on screens and checks their phone constantly.

The Signs of Digital Overload

Too much screen time is typically considered more than two hours of recreational screen use per day. It affects our health in countless ways, from eye strain and neck pain to social isolation and mental health challenges. It is even a risk factor for brain-related illnesses, such as dementia, stroke, and Parkinson’s disease.

Think about the times you scroll through social media only to feel mentally drained or unable to focus afterward. Signs of digital overload include:

- **Feeling tired and wired.** Constant stimulation increases stress, anxiety, and dependence on digital devices. It hinders sleep, especially when looking at screens late at night.
- **Experiencing brain fog.** Digital overload can reduce the brain’s gray matter, which is essential for everything from movement to memory to emotions. It weakens executive functioning skills, such as organization, problem solving, and decision making.
- **Feeling detached or alone.** Too much time on devices can lead to fewer face-to-face interactions. This contributes to social isolation, and difficulty communicating with others.

The Benefits of Time Outdoors

Research shows time outdoors can help offset digital overload, making us more focused, less stressed, and happier. Here are some remarkable benefits.

- **Nature is a natural antidepressant.** Sunlight triggers the release of serotonin, the same neurotransmitter targeted by many antidepressant medications. It reduces stress hormones and brain activity associated with rumination. This lowers the risk of anxiety and depression and enhances self-esteem and happiness.

- **Time outside improves concentration, stamina, and sleep.** A brisk walk increases energy levels, making us more present, focused, and productive. Exposure to natural light regulates melatonin production, improving overall sleep quality.
- **It opens the brain to new ideas.** Immersion in nature enhances the skills needed for planning and executing on complex tasks, including organization, cognitive flexibility, and creative problem-solving.
- **Connecting with nature supports better physical health.** Exercising outdoors improves cardiovascular health and lowers the risk of chronic diseases. Trees release natural oils, which stimulate the body to increase white blood cells that fight off viruses and infected cells.

Law firms that support employees in prioritizing time outdoors will not only see a happier and healthier workforce, but also a more focused and successful practice. Support from firm leadership is crucial, such as:

- Rewarding employees who actively engage in outdoor activities with wellness incentives.
- Scheduling walking meetings and outdoor team-building activities to enhance camaraderie and communication.
- Incorporating natural elements into the workplace design to improve creativity, focus, and the employee experience.

The benefits of trading screen time for green time cannot be overstated. Whether you are feeling tired, anxious, or distracted, remember sometimes the best reset is reconnecting with nature.