

# DIGITAL WELLBEING

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It was the beginning of year 2015! When I was to shift back from Bengaluru to Mumbai, after completing my assignment. I took a seemingly drastic step of discarding my TV set and not going for a new one. And it was a great relief. So much more time was available to me, that I patted my back for the decision. Now cut to 2025, I still do not have the TV set. But the extra time that I had gained has just evaporated as I would be spending so much time on my smartphone. And I don't play games on my mobile! Is it happening to you too?

World Health Organisation has defined health as physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease and deformity. In today's scenario, our wellbeing has four important aspects; physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing.



(<https://swgfl.org.uk/topics/digital-wellbeing/>)

	<b>Mental Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing Mental Illness</li> <li>• Positive Mental Health</li> <li>• Managing Mental Disorders</li> </ul>
	<b>Emotional Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving Potential</li> <li>• Valuing Self and Others</li> <li>• Caring for Self and Other</li> <li>• Resilience</li> </ul>
	<b>Physical Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Capacity/Disability</li> <li>• Sleep and Rest</li> <li>• Absence of Illness</li> <li>• Exercise and Fitness</li> </ul>
	<b>Social Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and Maintaining Relationships</li> <li>• Participating Appropriately</li> <li>• Sense of Belonging</li> </ul>

(<https://digitalcapability.jiscinvolve.org/wp/files/2019/09/defining-digital-wellbeing.png>)

Today, we live in a digital world. Everything we do has a digital element to it. We use digital devices at school, at work, and in our day-to-day lives, because they simply make everything easier to do. And the technology is developing very fast both in terms of software such as ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence and hardware such as devices like smart mobile phones. Almost every quarter, we see a new and advanced version of the device as well software. With advent of digital technology, more and more things, from banking, education to shopping are now available online.

This brings us to the important factor in shaping our mental health – Digital Wellbeing!

## What is digital wellbeing?

Digital well-being is a concept that describes how digital technology impacts people's mental, physical, and social health. It also refers to the practices that can help people use technology in a healthy way. Digital wellbeing considers the impact of technologies and digital services on our mental, physical and emotional health. Digital wellbeing does not have focus only on

the individual but should also include a broader societal and institutional perspective. It should help people use technology in a healthy way.

Thus, digital wellbeing is the impact of different technologies on our mental, emotional and even physical health. It's about maintaining a healthy relationship with technology, where we understand how technology can enhance our experience of the world, instead of detract from it. Digital wellbeing is also understood to mean having the capacity to look after our personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings.

In this way, technologies can actually help us:

- pursue our personal goals (e.g. fitness, maintaining a healthy diet, meditation, etc.);
- participate in social and community activities (e.g. through social media, organising events, participating in charities and local news);
- learn and add to our skill set - through taking online courses, researching new topics and staying on top of world news.

Digital wellbeing incorporates the idea of human beings that now live in an information society, using technologies positively to support both mental and physical health. In today's digital era, cultivating awareness of Digital Wellness is vital for our technology-driven society. It safeguards both our mental and physical well-being and fosters a harmonious relationship between humanity and technology, ensuring a brighter and more balanced future. Digital Wellness emphasizes a healthy balance between

online and offline life, promoting responsible screen time management, digital literacy, and ethical online conduct.

By prioritizing Digital Wellness, we can also mitigate the adverse effects of technology, such as cyberbullying and addiction, and ensure that our digital experiences enhance our life rather than detract from it. Digital wellness has a significant impact on interpersonal relations and academic performance. It promotes healthy communication, prevents conflicts and enhances relationships. On the other hand, it improves focus, encourages effective learning, and supports work-life balance, leading to better performance. As we navigate this ever-evolving digital landscape, embracing Digital Wellness becomes an essential pillar for a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable world.

### How digital technology can negatively impact our well-being?

With more and more things from work to leisure going digital our exposure to screen has multiplied exponentially. Further, the devices that we work on are getting increasingly smaller in size.

This leads to Eye strain, poor posture, and ergonomic issues such as neck and shoulder pain, repetitive strain injuries in hands and elbow etc.

The blue light from computer screens also has an effect on our sleeping hormone, melatonin, so using screens too much at night can lead to trouble with sleeping. Thus, excessive use of digital devices can cause Sleep issues.

Spending too much time on digital devices and the internet can get in the way of more healthy behaviours like spending time in nature, exercising, sleeping or spending time with friends and family members. This then leads to higher stress or lower mood, and problems with social connectedness.

Negative online experiences can affect how we feel about ourselves, our relationships with others, our thoughts and opinions and our perspective of the world in which we live. It's important we use digital technology in a way which enhances our wellbeing, and being aware of the potential threats it poses. Social media can be overwhelming. Sometimes we can think our online presence is more important than enjoying real life. Too often we compare our 'behind the scenes' with other person's 'highlights reel'. Also, social media platforms tend to be less moderated meaning that people can post certain content we might find upsetting.

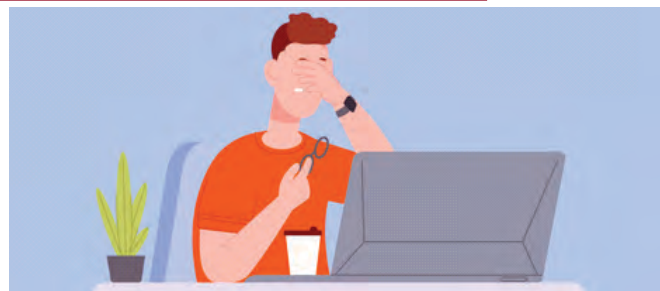
FOMO - The 'fear of missing out' - This refers to feeling as if others are having more fun, experiencing better things, or living better lives than you are. It is not just feeling as if there are other things you could be doing at this moment, but it involves a sense of helplessness that you are missing out on something fundamentally important that others are experiencing right now. It can make us feel boring, or uninteresting, and can lead to lower self-esteem unless we are maintaining a solid and

consistent online presence.

Aside from experiencing increased feelings of loneliness, FOMO can lead to greater involvement in unhealthy behaviours. Interestingly, FOMO acts as a trigger for increased use of social media sites like Instagram and Facebook, although it is often made worse by such increased use.

It further leads to Higher stress, lower mood, and social isolation. Sensitive individuals start comparing own online presence to others' highlight reels and videos and may develop inferiority complex. Another important effect is being exposed to upsetting content on social media as everyone has free access. There is so much of content and its basic objective is to hook you be it TV serials or OTT platform. Many students and young adults are getting addicted to online games. Further the social media has exploded encroaching on our post work quality time. And it is threatening the traditional family and societal values adversely. 'India's Got Latent' controversy is just one disturbing episode.

### Warning signs of excessive device use



(<https://www.buzzrx.com>)

- Symptoms of eye strain - eye watering, tired or aching eyes, blurred vision, double vision, dry eyes, eye redness or headaches
- Muscular discomfort - Tension, discomfort, or pain in neck, shoulder and/or back
- Spending more time communicating with others digitally than face-to-face such as on WhatsApp, Facebook etc.
- Feeling anxious when one does not have access to digital devices such mobile phone / computer.
- One starts comparing oneself to others.
- Difficulty in sleeping or have disruptions in sleeping pattern
- Reduction in face-to-face conversations with friends and family
- Feeling disconnected from those closest to oneself
- Using the internet is preventing us from getting other things done in the offline world

### How can digital well-being help?

Digital health and wellness is important due to a link between increased technology use and mental health issues, including attention issues and behaviour problems. In the workplace, excessive technology usage has also been associated with burnout, suggesting employers should adopt tools and

practices that moderate technology usage to promote healthier life and work. In addition to mitigating these negative outcomes, focusing on digital wellbeing in the workplace offers benefits for both businesses and employees.

Building a digital work environment that allows users to access corporate resources on bring your own devices, from anywhere, and more helps support employee wellness. Allowing employees to use a device they're comfortable with will help them get more done. Building an IT infrastructure that can deliver applications anywhere can also help support digital wellness by enabling users to work anywhere, at anytime. Flexibility is often a deciding factor for employees when choosing a role.

**Stronger employee engagement and higher productivity:** By promoting digital wellness through digital workspace technologies that encourage focus and reduce distraction, organizations can reduce worker exhaustion and improve employee engagement and productivity.

**Improved employee satisfaction:** Many employees identify better work-life balance as essential to job satisfaction, and digital wellness is an important element of this balance. By adopting digital wellbeing practices like unplugged whitespace time and flexible work arrangements, organizations can improve satisfaction in their workforce.

**Better health outcomes:** A lack of attention to digital wellness can lead to tech addiction, which is associated with higher stress levels and anxiety. If workers face burnout from excessive use of technology, they are more likely to take sick days and be less confident at work. By focusing on digital wellbeing, employees can alleviate these risks and enjoy better mental and physical health outcomes.

Digital wellness helps balance screen time, reduce distractions, create healthy habits and fosters healthy relationships.

#### Employee Wellness Solutions for Work from Home



<https://www.hifives.in/employee-wellness-ideas-for-work-from-home/>

### 1. Ergonomic Workspace Solutions

One of the most significant physical wellness issues faced by 'Work from Home' employees is body stiffness and pain caused by uncomfortable and improper chairs and workstations. Hence, organizations should choose to partially or fully finance ergonomic furniture for their 'Work from

Home' employees to address this common health issue.

### 2. Virtual Fitness Sessions

Virtual fitness sessions through live streaming or pre-recorded. These fitness sessions can range from Yoga, Pilates, Zumba, and other forms of workouts either in an online group format or individually on-demand.

### 3. Digital Wellness Platform

Organizations may invest in a digital wellness platform that provides employees with various articles, videos, tips, and other resources related to health, fitness, and nutrition.

### 4. Wellness Contests and Rewards

Organizations could consider instituting wellness-related rewards to encourage employees to participate in various fitness activities. This could be through integration with various fitness bands or devices that employees might use. Gamified leaderboards, contests, and rewards for winners can further motivate employees to participate in fitness activities. Though generally for wellness, this initiative can be fun and exciting for the employees.

### 5. Virtual Counselling and Support

Work-from-home employees' mental and emotional wellness is paramount to organizations. Webinars with well-known wellness experts and counsellors to build awareness about mental health and access to EAP (Employee Assistance Program) services are very beneficial.

## How can we help children develop healthy digital habits?



Children can be guided from a young age in their decisions relating to online behaviours. Leading by example is a really important aspect of this, as they are constantly learning from the behaviours and attitudes they're seeing around them. We can help children learn to limit screen time, avoid using devices at bedtime and take a discerning approach to content we view online. Encouraging open conversations will also enable children to approach trusted adults with any concerns they have regarding online content or online relationships.

Some further tips and advice for encouraging children's digital wellbeing:

Talk to your child about how it makes them feel when they're online; communicating with your child about their online lives in key. It's good to talk about the

positive aspects of the internet, whilst also discussing what to do if they're feeling pressured or unhappy while online.

Always remind your child that they can come to you with any concerns, and make sure you let them know that you'll not be angry or judgemental when they do.

Help your child to strike a balance between online and offline time, ensuring they're getting stuck in with outdoor activities, hobbies and social events.

Encourage your child to look out for the warning signs and understand that being online too long can negatively affect them. Whether it's getting sore eyes, an achy neck, or that their mind starts to feel overwhelmed. Remind them to take regularly breaks, whether they're online for school work or entertainment, it's equally important to give your eyes a break.

Set boundaries and use wellbeing tools together. Most technical divides actually have a digital wellbeing section, which you can look at together. You can also set screen limits, put parental locks on most social and entertainment platforms. Many households set boundaries like limiting screen time an hour before bed. This helps with getting a good quality sleep, and can help children learn discipline and boundary-setting for their future lives.

You should help your child stay critical online, reminding them to check information in more than one place and/or talk to someone they trust if something doesn't feel right. During PSHE and Citizenship lessons, they'll usually learn about fake news, and Photoshopped images. They'll learn about sharing personal information online, and talking to strangers. These are all topics that you can also tackle in your own time, either before or after they've learned about them in school.

Although the topic of digital wellbeing can feel like a big and scary topic to approach with your child, you don't need to be an expert to support their online lives. The most important thing is that you communicate openly and honestly, and answer any questions they have.

### Tips to Practice Digital Wellness

Practicing digital wellness means prioritizing self-control. It means using digital devices with intention, in order to bring the most benefit our physical and mental health, our relationships, our learning, safety, and work-life balance.

- Set time limits on digital device use... and keep them! Setting reminders or alarms can help!
- Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Take breaks to reduce eye strain after every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20-second break to look at something at least 20 feet away. Computers can be programmed to facilitate this. Software is also available.
- Remember your posture! Be kind to your spine! Remember to keep a good posture.

- Set an internet bed-time. Using the phone or digital technology before sleeping can have negative impacts on your sleeping pattern too. Activating 'do-not-disturb' settings after certain times to ensure that you are not disturbed by anything that is not urgent. Try reading a book before bed instead.
- Change your focus - Take some time away from digital devices every once in a while, and remember to live your real life: read books, engage in physical activity, spend more time outside or with your friends and family, and try some relaxation techniques!
- Set and keep 'gadget free' times when you are not using your digital devices. You can manage your notifications so that they only distract you when you can be distracted, or you can try deleting one smartphone app for a while and see how it feels.
- Seek positive digital content - Follow websites or social media accounts that make you feel good, keep you interested and share positive content. Remember that you can restrict certain types of content from popping up on your feeds.
- Ground yourself in reality - Remember that people's lives are much more complicated than what they show online. Remember that not all social media is real. Occasionally, scroll through your own profile and think about how you come across – does your own life look a lot better than your experience of it?
- Find your crowd - Whatever your hobbies and passions are in life, you will most likely find others who enjoy doing the same thing. Being part of a positive online community can boost your mental health. Meanwhile, reduce connections with people who make you feel bad about yourself and your life. Yes, it is that easy.
- It is also important to maintain healthy habits with optimal physical activity, balanced nutrition and undisturbed sleep.

### Conclusion

Today we live in the digital era where there are grave risks to our health. By understanding the risks in the digital world, modifying our lifestyle, controlling our behavior and following the useful tips, we can achieve our digital wellbeing at work, home, for our children and continue to enjoy a healthy life.

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