

Episode: Reducing Social Media



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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Welcome to the podcast. Today we are going to talk about reducing social media. This was a really fun one for me to dive into personally, because I have implemented a lot of what I'm going to talk about today in the last several months. Now, just like when I teach emotional eating or losing weight or becoming a conscious drinker and drinking less alcohol, I never tell you what you should do.

I only help you bring awareness to what you think is best for you. That's causal life coaching. That's what I do. I'm not going to ever say you should do this and you must do this. No, you know, what's best for you. I'm here to increase your awareness so that you can make that decision for you. So like with the drinking, I teach you how to make those decisions ahead of time, just like with eating.

And that's what I want to encourage you to do with social media. I'm going to give you a little bit of background and talk about why you might want to reduce social media. And then I want to teach you how to do it if you're interested. And if you're not interested at the end, I'm also going to give you some things that you can do just to increase your awareness. If you're not ready to really reduce it.

I think that from that increased awareness, you can live the most intentional life possible. If you don't really know what results are in your life due to using social media, then you won't know whether it's best for you to continue using it or not. So, when I was thinking about social media, I first started thinking about the thoughts that people have myself included during the posting or the scrolling.

So have you ever thought about what your sentences are in your head when you're scrolling or when you're posting? I wrote some down and this is a collection that I thought of and that I've heard other people say, and that I've coached clients on. It sounds like this. Oh, there's a like, Oh, there's another, like, I wonder how many likes I'll get. This post is doing really well.

People like this, I can't believe she's complaining about that. She is so lucky and she doesn't even realize it. Oh my gosh. I wish my legs looked like that. How come she can get pregnant so easily? And I can't. She is perfect. There's no way I'll ever have that in my life. Must be nice to have a family like that. Must be nice to be rich. Oh, I want to be on a beach right now.

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How does she have so many friends? Oh my gosh. I need that right now. What do you think? What comes up for you when I said those sentences or what comes up for you when you think, what am I thinking during my scroll? Sometimes positive thoughts come up like, Oh, I'm so happy for her. But more often than not, they are thoughts that don't feel good.

And this is normal. It's just your brain naturally going into comparing what you're looking at to what you have. Now. You can coach yourself, but it's harder to do. So if you think about watching the news all day long, the news wouldn't cause you to think certain thoughts. In fact, five people could watch the same reporting and have five completely different thoughts and feelings. We know this circumstances do not cause us to think a certain way, but you can help your brain out by making it a little bit easier to think thoughts that serve you.

So that's why I've talked about reducing your news intake, make it closest to the source. So during COVID, it was pay attention to your governor's site and the CDC, and get as close to the source as possible and put restrictions on it. So you're listening or reading or hearing about that information. Maybe once a day at a certain time, it's going to be a lot easier to manage your mind that way than if you decide to watch, listen, and read all day long, this is what we're doing with social media.

And we don't really notice it because we don't think there's a quantifiable outcome. So we look at our outcomes in other areas like, are we showing up for work? Are we getting our kids ready? Are we creating our businesses? Whatever the case may be. We look at those outcomes and if we're doing them, social media is just something that we fit in whenever we want.

And what I want you to consider is that there are reasons why you might want to pay attention more to how often you're scrolling, how you feel when you scroll and what that inner dialogue is when you scroll. So I'm probably not the first person to tell you that social media is addictive, but it's worth mentioning here in all of my research for this episode, that was, you know, the top thing that came up.

I want you to know why it's addictive. So with every scroll, there is something new and different, but it's not too different. It's like, it keeps you hooked. It's kind of like gambling. Sometimes you're winning. Sometimes you're losing. So it keeps you going. It's predictable enough that it's worth it. And it keeps you coming back thinking, what did I miss? And then there's this dopamine hit that you get.

When someone positively interacts with your post, you get maybe a like, or a comment and your brain shoots off the dopamine telling you, Hey, this is awesome. This feels good. So we start using social media to feel better. It's kind of like using the cookie to feel better and it does work.

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So this is why it's important that you know, it's happening because your brain is always seeking the pleasure and just like wine, just like the cookie social media gives you that pleasure, but like all external pleasures, if they're not done intentionally, and if you don't understand how they work, there will be a net negative. What I find to be the negative with social media is that while it might feel good to get those likes or those comments, that's actually increasing your need for external approval. So your approval of yourself becomes based on out there becomes based on the likes and being validated by people, approving you.

And that validation is so addictive and we're always looking for it because your brain just wants to feel worthy. And it feels really good in the moment, but that's temporary and that's not the long lasting wellbeing that will come from you validating yourself. It's going to be, you constantly changing yourself and adapting to what other people think about you. It's kind of exhausting, but you'll constantly be looking for that external approval. And through that, you learn that out there is more important than here.

That everything outside of you is more important than your own thoughts and your own feelings and your own actions, right? It's like the teenager who wants to be on their phone all day and with their friends and doesn't want to be around the family at all. It's kind of like that. And we do this as adults without realizing it because we're not saying, Hey, mom, let me go to the party.

What we're doing is we're checking our phones during dinner, or we're looking for someone to say, I like you, or I like that, or whatever else on social media that gives us that validation, that external approval, and it increases your need for that approval. At the same time, you will start to compare yourself to others more. So you are you. And when you look at someone else, your brain is gonna default to comparing that other person to you. And that's all social media is it's focused on out there.

Other people's thoughts, feelings, and actions, and you don't actually even know what their real story is. All you know is the perception that you see and that you experience from the scroll. So differently you're getting their highlight reel, right? So then you start to think that everyone else is a lot happier than you. And a lot prettier, skinnier, luckier, more successful, richer, whatever the case may be.

Now, if you've been listening for a while or you're in Grow You, you might be onto yourself a little bit. So I don't find that I'm, you know, depressed or sulking after a scroll, but my thoughts are a little bit more subtle. And I think that subtlety actually can be more harmful because if not checked, we can think that they're not a problem. So if you notice that you feel like crap, right after social media, the worse you feel, the more you might have awareness of it.

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But if you just simply think, Oh my gosh, you know, I didn't even know that existed. I need that. And you're doing that constantly. You might not even see that it's a problem or that you're becoming addicted to it or that it's something that you should regulate at all. So as a certified life coach, I am constantly trying new things and new ways of living and trying to challenge myself to better myself and to live intentionally.

And that's why I quit drinking and decided to limit my sugar in ways that I hadn't before. There are many coaches who don't use social media at all. And so I decided to give this a try for myself, and that's sort of what led to creating this podcast. And what I did was I took Facebook and Twitter off my phone. I'm not on TikTok.

So Instagram is the app that I will periodically put on and off my phone based on when I want to use it. And the underlying rule for me, for my social media intake is that I want to be a producer, not a consumer. And this is something that I learned a while ago from Brendon Burchard, another personal development guy. And it reinforces why social media can be a negative for you. If you are constantly consuming, you can't be creating.

You are having way too much consumption. It's like watching Netflix all day. Instead, it's scrolling all day, so you don't have time to produce. And you certainly don't have the mental chatter to create. It feels a lot better to consume your brain likes consuming because your brain likes to be efficient. And it likes to repeat the past and it feels very safe. So it's a hard sell because what I'm saying is don't go get that dopamine hit. Instead, take those apps off your phone.

Only use social media intentionally and go set some bigger goals and go see what happens when you do that. And what's going to happen is that it's going to be hard. It might not feel that great. And so you might question whether it's even worth it, but I want to tell you that it is worth it because you live more authentically, you lead your life instead of, you know, kind of reacting to other people's lives.

It's harder, but it's more fulfilling. You're living your life on purpose this way. And your mental chatter is not what's she doing. How do I get that? I wish I looked like that, or what's going on in her life? Or why is she so lucky instead, it's, I'm going to set this big goal. I'm going to create the plan to do it. This is what I need to get done to achieve this. And all of that mental chatter matters.

I'm constantly telling my team that there are things that might seem really small, that I'll have you do, especially my assistant. And it's something that I always say, I'm having you do this so that it's out of my brain, because if I'm thinking about it, then I can't be thinking about something else. And I think the more successful you become, the more you value your mental space. So you

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need to have a lot of space to make decisions and to create. And social media will get in the way of that.

So here are the steps that I have for you to reduce social media. And then I'm going to tell you after that, what you can do if you're kind of not ready, but you are curious about this. And before I tell you kind of how to do this, I want you to keep in mind that you can always go back. I think about this with alcohol and with sugar and with anything else and kind of trying out meat. I don't eat meat. I can always go back. So I'm the one in charge.

And I think when you remember this, it feels really liberating instead of how we often feel, which is trapped or like we're missing out on something. When we make a rule like, but we already have rules in our lives, right? We don't do drugs. For example, there are certain foods you don't eat and you don't think about those consciously.

You just avoid them or don't do them. I don't smoke cigarettes. You don't smoke cigarettes. And it's not, there's no drama about missing out there. It's just not something you do. So with anything that you limit or reduce in your life, remember that it's a choice that you are making and that you make these choices consciously or unconsciously all the time.

And that you can always change your mind. It's like I wear neutrals because it reduces the amount of decisions that I have to make with respect to my clothes. I can always change my mind. Same with social media. It feels so freeing to me when I think, Oh yeah, I'm choosing not to drink alcohol right now. I can always re decide, I'm the one with the power here. So this is how you can go about reducing social media. If you are interested.

The first step is to kind of do this social media audit, where you log in to your social media accounts and you unfollow anyone who, by following it, isn't serving you. So if you find that you are following a bunch of influencers and it makes it extremely hard for you to manage your mind all the time, you can unfollow them. It's kind of like if you have one friend and it's just always a challenge to be friends with this person, you can just decide to end that relationship and complete it. You can change the circumstance.

You don't always have to manage your mind. Now, if you're constantly avoiding people and ending relationships, because people are challenging to be around then it's your brain. And it's not just, it's hard with that one person. So for social media, it's the same thing. If you find that, regardless of who you look at, it's extremely difficult to manage your mind, then this won't work. But what I find is that there are some accounts for most people that make it particularly challenging to follow.

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So unfollow those accounts and follow accounts that energize you. I love following puppy accounts. I find it so fun. So I follow puppy accounts and I don't follow accounts that I don't think serve me. So that's the first step it's to be really intentional about who you're allowing to show up on your feed.

The second step is to take the apps off your phone. It's so fascinating to me that I thought this was going to be such a big deal. And it ended up being so easy. It was crazy. I thought, you know, I scroll a lot or, um, I think this is going to be hard, but it ended up being fine. I took them off my phone. And again, you can just redownload them if you want. But I think this is a really good trial to see how much you're picking up and scrolling.

Step number three is to decide ahead of time, how much you want to use social media. So this is where you create the constraints. You create the rules. Maybe you're going to check your social media accounts whenever you are on your computer. That's kind of what I do right now. I have a social media manager who helps me post the content that I create.

So all of the copy and the words, those come from me, but she helps me post them at certain times. So you can decide ahead of time, how often you want to check it or use it. Maybe it's every morning at 8:00 AM for 30 minutes, or maybe it's at noon for 15 minutes, or maybe it's only on the weekends and you're only gonna do it on your computer. And on the weekends, you're going to do it twice a day at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM. Whatever the case is, you decide ahead of time what your rules are going to be. I really recommend not making them complicated. Cause then you'll forget, and it will take up more mental space than you want.

Step number four is to follow your schedule. So you follow through. It's pretty easy to take the apps off your phone. And it's actually pretty easy to come up with a schedule for how you want to use it. The harder part is following through, especially when you are creating this as a new habit. So right now you might be in the habit of, you know, every time you take a break or, you know, do something else, you check your phone and you just scroll. So the following through is that new habit. You're not going to pick up your phone and scroll. You're going to have the urge to, but you're not going to do it.

Step number five is to allow the urge it's to notice it and it's to breathe into it. And part of this, isn't just, you know, in your day to day in the habit of it, but also when you're feeling a little bit down, we tend to want to avoid that negative emotion and the way we all avoid it is different. Some of us might pour a glass of wine. Some of us might go, you know, pick out the ice cream.

And some of us might just sit there and binge Netflix and scroll social media until we feel better for hours on end. Never actually feeling better, right? There's that, that down side to it. Even if it

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feels better in the moment, the problem is still there. The negative emotion comes back the next day. So if you can have awareness of this and allow the urge, you've already won.

Okay. And remind yourself, Oh, this is just a feeling. This is just the desire to give in. This is okay. I can feel this. So the steps again are to unfollow the accounts that are particularly difficult for you. And to follow those that energize you step two, is to take the apps off your phone. Step three is to create a schedule and decide that ahead of time. Step four is to follow the schedule to follow through. And step five is to allow the urge because normally what happens is you have the urge and then you tell yourself a story like, Oh, it's just one time. It'll be fine. What I want you to do is say, no, I decided ahead of time. I'm going to be accountable to myself. And if I want to change the rules, I can, but it's not going to be in the moment.

It's like deciding you're not going to eat the French fries you follow through. And then you can plan it again next time ahead of time. So that you're not giving into your primitive brain in the moment that just wants that, that dopamine hit that pleasure right away.

If you are not ready to reduce it in this way. I remember I had some hesitations about it, but it's so interesting because the upside has been so great for me, that I look forward to reducing it even more. And my hesitation was having a business and I want to connect with all of you and how can I do that if I'm not on there?

But what I found is that a lot of my was consuming it wasn't the producing. So it's not like I'm posting several times a day. So even if I post once a day, all that requires is for me to be on there once a day, I had that fear and it turned out to be not true, which is great because now I don't use social media as much.

So if you're not ready to reduce it though, consider increasing your awareness of it. Meaning write down how much you check social media. So choose a 24 hour period. It's kind of like doing a food journal for a day or something like that. Just kind of check in with yourself, say, okay, tomorrow I am going to write down every time I check social media, all of the time slots and for how long.

That is going to show you how much time you are actually consuming social media. I think it was, um, Brendon Burchard. It might've been Russell Brunson. Who said, if you're spending more than 10 minutes consuming per day, it's too much. You want to be the producer. Okay. And that's more of like a business thing. So if you have a business, you can be the producer of social media and you're helping your customers and your clients.

And you're connecting with them. It's a very different thing than being a consumer of it, where you're using it to just kind of get that validation or escape in the moment. So after you write it

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down and you kind of check in with how often you're doing it, the next thing I want you to do is to check in with how you feel when you're using it.

So let's say you do the journal and you write down all of the times during those times, ask yourself, what emotion am I feeling? How am I feeling right now? How am I feeling? And if you're not used to identifying your emotions, if you're not in Grow You two ways to describe emotions that might help you is open and expansive or very closed and restrictive. So if you feel open, if the emotion is energizing, that's like on the positive side, if it feels very closed and restricted, that's the negative emotion.

So keeping those two in mind, what emotion do you feel when you're scrolling? The third step is to write down what you were thinking about after you use it. So remember I opened with that inner dialogue of when you scroll. And I think that it's so habitualized that we haven't even brought any awareness to it. So this will help you write down what that inner dialogue is.

So after you're done scrolling, ask yourself, what am I thinking right now? Is it, Oh, I need that. Oh, she's so lucky. Oh, I wish I was on a beach. What are you thinking about? And are those thoughts serving you? And the fourth step is to just ask yourself, are you happy with the outcome? Are you happy with the results? I think that seeing what comes up for you when you scroll is really useful, because it shows you your brain.

But I think that it's so hard to manage your brain if you are just constantly scrolling. So I think reducing social media is helping your brain out. Someone asked me the other day in Grow You about adjusting your environment to make it easier for you to do something like let's say it was going to the gym and you lay out your workout clothes and you, you know, set your environment up to make it easier for you to do that.

And she said, well, then isn't that saying that your thoughts aren't creating the result of you going? And I said, no, that's just you helping your brain out. So you can still just ignore the clothes and not go. It's going to be based on what you think, but you want to make it as easy as possible for your brain to win because it's not always easy, right?

In fact, 50% of the time it's not. And that other 50% of the time, we don't want to ruin it with making it harder on ourselves than it needs to be. So it's just going to be a lot harder to manage your mind. If you're constantly scrolling, if you're constantly concerned with other people, what they think, looking for validation from them, wanting that dopamine hit from your social media, all of it just makes it harder for your brain to think on purpose.

Now, watch out for your brain having objections to this. It will likely think that you're going to miss out on something. If you reduce your social media, it will likely tell you something like, Oh

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my scroll, isn't that big of a deal? Oh, it's the little joy I find in the day. But I just want to challenge you as your coach and mentor and friend, that it's a good idea to test this out.

Even if it's not something that you keep, give it a try and see what comes up for you. I personally think that I am able to focus on here now, my life, my thoughts, my feelings, my actions, my results, whether that's relaxing and hanging out with my family or whether that's increasing my productivity and achieving big goals. All of it is amplified with less social media and I'm still on social media. And I run a business and social media is important, but I can still make that happen without being a consumer of it.

So that's my challenge for you is to see where you fall in. And if nothing else to increase your awareness with how you're using social media, how you feel well you're using it, what the mental chatter is while you're using it and see what comes up for you by reducing it by taking the apps off your phone, by trying to stick to that schedule by following through, and allowing the urges and seeing what your life is like without so much of the scroll, think it's worth it.

It's something that I didn't really consider doing initially. And I've been really pleased with the results and I continue to use it less and less as my business grows and, and I'm able to have help with it. And regardless of if you have a business or not as a consumer of social media, you can absolutely reduce your, your scroll time. That's what I have for you today. So pay attention to your social media use, and I will talk with you next week. Bye bye.

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