

ARROW ARTICLES TEN TIPS FOR HANDLING CONNECTIVITY

In our technological, digital, social-media age there are some wonderful things that we can do. There are also some related challenges. Hyper-connectivity is one of them.

Here are ten top tips to keep our connectivity and screen usage in a good place. You probably won't agree with all of them. No problem. But why not work out your own best practise (covenant) with technology, social media and screen usage, share it with someone close, and then live it out.

1. REMEMBER SCREENS ARE ADDICTIVE

The same chemicals are released in our brains through continued screen usage as when taking drugs. Therefore, it helps to be careful about how we use screens and regularly exercise practices that keep them in a healthy place.

- [Simon Sinek Explains the Millennial Paradox](#) (from three minutes fifteen seconds).
- [How Screen Addiction is Damaging Kid's Brains.](#)
- [Slaves to the Smartphone](#) – the horrors of hyperconnectivity and how to restore a degree of freedom.

2. NO SCREENS FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR AFTER YOU RISE

This will improve your spiritual and emotional well-being. Connecting to a screen early in the day is likely to lead to connecting with other things (social media, emails) that will distract you from a more reflective and prayerful start to the day. If you use a screen for your prayer time, either think about changing to paper or ensure that the screen is not connected to the internet and that you don't get distracted by other things.

3. NO SCREENS IN THE BEDROOM

Blue light emitted from screens doesn't help with sleep, and we are more likely to be distracted by other things on screens that lead us to actually going to sleep later than we intended. (Exceptions may include a Kindle to read a book, or even a TV, but even with these be careful). If you use your phone for your alarm call, get an alarm clock!

- [How Blue LEDs Affect Sleep.](#)
- [What a bad night's sleep really does to your body.](#)

4. DISCONNECT FROM SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAILS (BEING ONLINE?) WHEN DOING FOCUSED WORK

There is no such thing as multi-tasking. Every time we switch between things we lose some of our focus, therefore turning off email, social media and so on actually helps us to be more productive in our work. Simply close programmes or turn off phones, or even put a bar on your router between certain hours.

- For those on Apple products take a look at the Forest app. You set it up on your phone (costs only £1.99), tell it how long you want to work for on something, and then it starts to grow a tree. If you touch your phone



during that time the tree is cut down! May sound a little strange, but those who find themselves easily distracted by things tell me it works a treat.

5. THINK ABOUT WHETHER IT IS WISE TO DO WORK EMAILS ON YOUR PHONE

The temptation will be to 'check' your emails, but a key principle is 'don't check your emails, process your emails'. Checking them actually leads to your attention being drawn elsewhere but the email not being processed. Also, for many, it will take longer to process our emails on a phone than on a larger screen, so it isn't an efficient way of doing our work emails.

6. ONLY DO EMAILS AT SET TIMES

Emails are best done together (batching) at set times of the day. Identify how many emails on average you receive. Work out how long on average it takes you to process that number of emails. Identify how many times a day it would be sensible to process emails. Then put that time in your diary, and only process emails at that time. Turn off notifications so you don't get distracted by them through the rest of the day.

- [How to Get Your Inbox to Zero Every Day.](#)
- [Ninja Email Processing...](#)
- [Stop Checking Email So Often.](#)

7. CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS ABOUT RESPONSE TIMES

One of the challenges of modern technology is that people expect instant responses. But this doesn't have to be the case. Clarify with people the timeframe in which you will respond to emails, text messages, phone messages, social media posts. It doesn't have to be instant, and indeed is often best if it isn't. Constant and continual availability isn't a good thing. There are times when we need to detach.

8. DON'T CHECK PHONES/TABLETS WHEN GATHERED WITH OTHER PEOPLE

It is common for a session to end at a conference and rather than people turning to chat with one another as they leave for coffee, they immediately go on their phones.

Some may even be checking their phones throughout the session itself. The discipline of engagement, of being fully present with something or someone, is a tough discipline to exercise, but a vital one. Only check phones or tablets in private space so that we can be fully present when with others in public space. It can help to leave your phone/tablet in your bag, or at a residential conference, in your bedroom. If you take notes on your screen then put it into flight mode so you won't be tempted to connect elsewhere.

This can also be an issue in the home, [see this article from the BBC.](#)

9. REDUCE YOUR CONNECTION POINTS

There are so many places we can connect online today that it can all become a bit overwhelming, so reducing our connection points is simple way to keep on top of things.

- Unsubscribe from emails you receive but rarely if ever look at.
- Close down one or more platforms you are connected with.
- Let people know that you don't respond to messages through, for example, Facebook and ask them to contact you via email or text or whatever your preferred connection point is.

10. MONITOR YOUR ATTACHMENT TO 'LIKES' AND FOMO

Two things seem to drive our connection online. FOMO, fear of missing out, and approval. FOMO can lead to an almost compulsive need to check online to see what is happening, either in the wider world (an addiction to the BBC news or equivalent Apps/websites), or in our social networks to see if other people are having a better time than us. The desire for approval, to be liked, leads us to post things and monitor closely the number of likes or watches. Our sense of well-being can become connected to how people respond. It helps to reflect on both these things, and to monitor our attachment to FOMO or 'likes'. Take a look at this [article](#).



And here is an additional top tip...

11. FAST FROM SOCIAL MEDIA/CONNECTIVITY

Because connectivity is addictive in nature it is a good spiritual discipline to fast regularly from screens. For example, fast from connectivity one hour a day, one day a week, one week a year. On your day of rest that might mean no screen time at all, or no screen time until a certain point in the day. Another option is to fast during a particular church season (e.g. Lent) once a year to ensure that connectivity is kept in its right place. That might mean no social media during your fast, or no screens apart for work through that season.

- [Six Benefits of Doing a Fast from Social Media.](#)
- [Thinking Biblically About ... Social Media.](#)

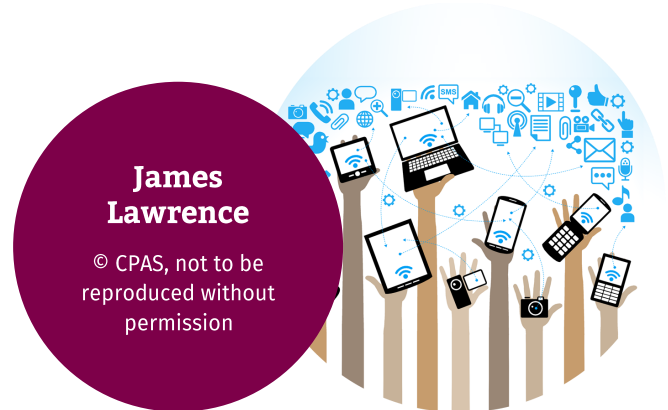
Additional Practical Ideas

- When you arrive home put your phone somewhere so that you don't carry it around with you. Ideally make that 'somewhere' the same place each time and only go to it if you need to. It means you are more likely to be present with others and with yourself around your home.
- Don't use your phone in public space, for example whilst walking, in a cue, in the car, waiting for a train. The great danger is we 'fill time' with our phones. Instead try to be present with others, observant of what is around you, and 'still' in those moments of quiet that come your way in the course of a day.

- Create a device free, low-technology space in your home, where no devices are allowed, and fill it with fun, creative, enjoyable and engaging things to do.
- Only use a screen for a specific purpose, not to counteract 'boredom' or fill time, otherwise it stays off.

Additional Resources

- The Tech-wise Family (Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place), Andy Crouch (Baker Books).
- 12 Ways Your Phone is Changing Your Life, Tony Reinke (Crossway).
- The World Beyond Your Head: How to Flourish in an Age of Distraction, Matthew Crawford (Penguin).
- Digitally Remastered: A Biblical Guide to Reclaiming Your Virtual Self, Guy Brandon and Chine McDonald (Muddy Pearl).
- Virtually Human, Ed Brooks and Pete Nicholas (IVP).



For Reflection

'Technology is in its proper place when it helps us bond with the real people we have been given to love. It's out of its proper place when we end up bonding with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet.

Technology is in its proper place when it starts great conversations. It's out of its proper place when it prevents us from talking with and listening to one another.

Technology is in its proper place when it helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit. It's out of its proper place when it helps us escape the limits and vulnerabilities of those bodies altogether.

Technology is in its proper place when it helps us to acquire skill and mastery of domains that are the glory of human culture (sports, music, the arts, cooking, writing, accounting etc.). When we let technology replace the development of skill with passive consumption, something has gone wrong.

Technology is in its proper place when it helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are part of and responsible for stewarding. It's out of its proper place when it keeps us from engaging the wild and wonderful natural world with all our senses.

Technology is in its proper place only when we use it with intention and care. If there is one thing I've discovered about technology it's that it doesn't stay in its proper place on its own.'

Taken from The Tech-wise Family by Andy Crouch.