



Screens & stress

a close connection

If you're feeling the effects of stress and anxiety in your life, you may want to look at your use of smartphones, tablets, and TV. A study done by psychologists at the University of Worcester in England says that frequent use of electronic devices could be linked to higher stress levels.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, think about cutting back on the amount of screen time you have each day. This works well as a family effort. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recommends these tactics:

- **Find out how much you use screens.** Keep a log of how much time you spend on screens outside of work or school. Often people are surprised to see how much time they spend on electronic devices.

- **Set a two-hour goal.** Try to keep non-work and non-school screen time activities to less than two hours a day. This is a good rule for adults and kids.
- **Find alternatives.** Explore fun things you can do instead of screen time, such as playing a game or going for a walk.
- **Combine exercise with screens.** If you're going to watch TV, do stretching, yoga, or other exercises while you're watching. This can help reduce stress levels and improve your overall health.
- **Have designated screen-free times.** Whenever possible, have family meals without the TV on or phones nearby. Spend time talking with your family and enjoying your food. Set aside other times of the day as screen-free. An hour before bedtime is a good choice to help you wind down for sleep.

Emergency stress stoppers

The next time you feel your stress level rise, try one of these tips:

- Take three to five deep breaths.
- Count to ten before you speak.
- If possible, walk away from the situation and say you'll be able to handle it later.

Source: American Heart Association