

SANCTIFYING SOCIAL MEDIA: DOOMSCROLLING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Media and Social Media

Reliable media outlets help us stay up to date on current events, but we can't spend all day reading the news and scrolling through social media. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit and the like can offer us incredible connections to others across the globe through online communities. But they also have a huge downside, especially with unregulated comments, posts and commentary that might be untrue, triggering and/or offensive. It's so easy to get sucked into these platforms, which are designed to grab and hold onto our attention — especially in times of uncertainty. In those moments it is easy — and even tempting — to check continuously for updates, but "**doomscrolling**" can negatively affect our mental and physical health. Our bodies can respond to violent images and videos as if we were in danger, which can lead to secondary trauma responses. During a crisis, our constant consumption of news can cause physical symptoms such as



FATIGUE



DEPRESSION

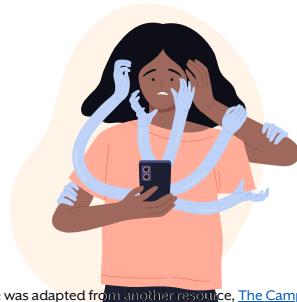


ANXIETY



INSOMNIA

to develop from the release of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. (Source: [Verywellmind.com](https://www.verywellmind.com)).



This resource was adapted from another resource, [The Campaign to Manage Election Anxiety](#), which we co-created with Civic Spirit. Nothing in this resource is to be construed as medical advice or treatment. For all medical questions, please consult a medical professional or treatment facility.

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Be mindful of how much time you spend watching the news, scrolling through social media, etc., and take care of yourself accordingly. Consider the following to help you think about your social media consumption in general and in moments of crisis.



What is your plan for checking the news that informs but does not agitate you? Do you engage with multiple media outlets so you have opportunities to understand multiple viewpoints?



What motivates you to engage on social media? Think about whether this encourages connection or fosters distance. Who can you connect with if you have seen or read something you need to discuss?



How do you know you need to take a break? What other healthy coping activities can you turn to?

The [News Literacy Project](#) and [AllSides](#) have materials for unpacking the news and navigating the information landscape that can be used in the classroom, the dining room or anywhere we get together.

The Hebrew word for being holy/sanctified is **“kadosh.”** However, many scholars stress that to be kadosh also means to be separate. This dual meaning – to make something holy is to separate it from other parts of our lives – is significant. Separating ourselves from things that are potentially harmful to our mental health like social media would mean making our lives kadosh, holy. This is not unlike Shabbat, a day defined by holiness and separation from the rest of the week and a time when we separate ourselves from the world around us to re-engage with ourselves and the things that make us feel whole. **Try to find your own sense of kadosh as you navigate staying informed and enjoying social media while also drawing boundaries to give yourself space.**

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Supporting Yourself

When you are experiencing heightened anxiety, you have many ways to support yourself and regulate your system.

Acknowledging and Validating Feelings



While it may be tempting to ignore whatever reaction you are having to the news, you should stay in tune with your own mental health, self-monitor it, and plan whatever self-care practice you feel will offer the best coping strategy for you at the moment. Even if you don't "feel" anything, you can still be affected. Many people experience physical or emotional symptoms right away; others may need some time before they experience symptoms.

Breathing

Being aware of and changing our breathing is the primary strategy we have to control anxiety and other emotional responses to stress. When we are anxious, the body's natural stress response is to breathe shallowly and take in less oxygen. By breathing more slowly and deeply, we can reverse this process and calm our agitation. Check out [this resource](#) adapted from the Foundation for Jewish Camp.



BREATHING IS SOMETHING WE TYPICALLY DO UNCONSCIOUSLY. TAKING THE TIME TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT OUR BREATH CAN HELP TO CALM THE MIND AND BODY

INHALE FOR 4 SECONDS THROUGH YOUR NOSE

INHALE

HOLD YOUR LUNGS EMPTY FOR 4 SECONDS

HOLD

HOLD THE AIR FOR 4 SECONDS

EXHALE

EXHALE FOR 4 SECONDS OUT OF YOUR MOUTH

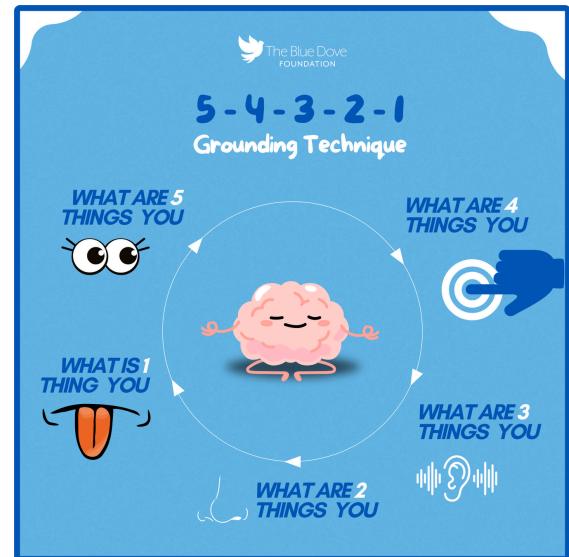
TIP: PLAY AROUND WITH INCREASING THE COUNT TO 6 SECONDS, OR DECREASING IT TOWARDS 1 SECOND AS A WAY TO ADJUST THE ENERGY OF THIS EXERCISE.



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Grounding

Certain strategies can help contain our emotional reactions, stop unproductive cycles of thinking, and bring us into the present moment, where we have more control over our mind and body, and where we feel safer. Examples include utilizing our five senses, e.g., comforting touch or smell, or identifying unhelpful and untrue patterns of thinking. [Read more about grounding tools and techniques.](#)



Meditating

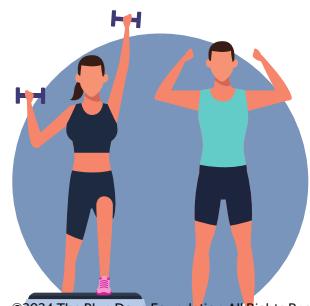


Studies find meditation can help manage the symptoms of different conditions, including anxiety. You can engage in meditation in many ways that allow you to connect your mind and body in order to help create a sense of calmness. [Read about different types of meditation to find one that might interest you.](#) As with anything, the more you practice meditation, the more value you will see.

Moving Your Body



[Moving your body](#) can support your mental health as much as it supports your physical health, helping to alleviate stress, process your emotions, and ground you in your body. Movement can mean a wide range of activities, from simply walking for a few minutes each day to more strenuous exercises. Think about small ways you can incorporate movement into your daily life; even small things make a big difference.



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Connection and Community

Think about one or two people you can reach out to in your circle when you're feeling stress and anxiety during this election season. Identifying an "[emotions chavruta](#)" (Hebrew for partner) with whom you can share what's going through your mind allows you to be raised up by those who care about you. Reach out to friends and family to "check in" and see how they are doing.

How to check in:

1

Find a partner with whom you are willing to be vulnerable.



2

Both of you write down and share three worries on your mind.



- Consider using this structure: "I feel _____ about _____ because _____."
- This format helps people assess and meditate on each worry, considering the core feelings and beliefs behind it.

3

Allow your partner to listen, ask questions and share insight. Allow yourself to accept strength and new ways of looking at the situation.

4

When your partner speaks, listen intently, validate their emotional experience, and offer support.

[Essential Partners](#) has materials to help schools and communities facilitate challenging conversations and generate opportunities for understanding and support.

