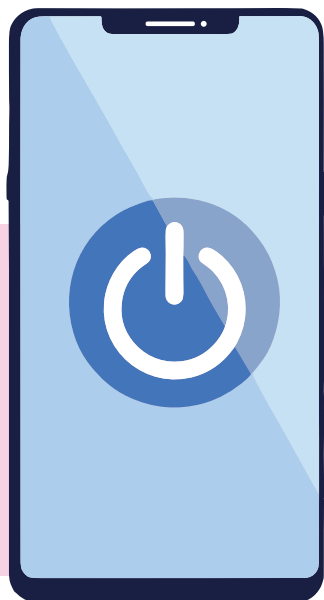


DIGITAL STRESS



Staying Connected Without Burning Out

For many people in the disability community, the digital world is more than entertainment—it can be a lifeline. Online creators, advocates, coaches, and support communities often provide connection, accessibility tips, identity affirmation, and guidance for navigating an ableist world. That value is real and important. But even helpful tools can become exhausting when screen time becomes nonstop. So, here's some friendly tips and tricks to help use digital spaces in ways that protect your energy, promote healing, conserve energy, don't harm attention, and ultimately help your brain health.



WHAT IS DIGITAL STRESS?

Digital stress is the mental and physical strain caused by constant notifications, endless scrolling, online pressure, doom scrolling, multitasking, and feeling like you must always be available.



Notifications



Mental overload



Sleep disruption



Eye strain



Irritability



Attention fatigue



Anxiety



Low energy

COMMON SIGNS YOU MAY NEED A RESET

- ☒ You feel drained after being online
- ☒ You lose track of time scrolling
- ☒ You open apps automatically without thinking
- ☒ You feel tense when notifications appear
- ☒ You compare yourself to others online
- ☒ You have trouble sleeping after screen use
- ☒ You can't focus after long digital sessions

WHY THIS CAN HIT BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS HARDER

Many brain injury survivors already manage energy carefully. Screens can quietly consume more of that energy than expected.

Possible Challenges



Cognitive fatigue – prolonged attention can be exhausting



Headaches – especially after long sessions



Light sensitivity – bright screens may trigger discomfort



Reduced concentration – constant switching drains focus



Noise overload – autoplay audio or video can overwhelm



Sleep disruption – nighttime screen use may interfere with rest

Technology should support your life or recovery —not consume your energy.



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8 WAYS TO LOWER DIGITAL STRESS (without disappearing)



1 Build “Pause Points”

Set timers for 20–30 minute check-ins. Ask: Do I still want to be here?



5 Move Between Scrolls

Stand, stretch, walk, breathe



2 Rest Your Eyes

Try the **20-20-20** rule: Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.



6 Spend Energy on What Gives Back

Choose communities, education, or creators that support you—not content that drains you.



3 Silence Nonessential Alerts

Not every ping deserves your nervous system.



7 Make One Small Screen-Free Zone

Examples: mealtime, bathroom, first 15 minutes after waking.



4 Protect Sleep

Reduce screen use 30–60 minutes before bed when possible.



8 Curate Your Feed

Mute accounts that trigger stress. Follow people who educate, empower, and respect boundaries.

ONLINE HEALTH ADVICE: BE CAREFUL, NOT FEARFUL

Digital health content can be valuable—especially for people who face physical or economic barriers to care. But not every creator is qualified.

Before you trust advice, ask:

- ☒ Do they list real credentials or lived experience honestly?
- ☒ Are they selling certainty, fear, or miracle cures?
- ☒ Do they cite reliable sources?
- ☒ Does the advice match what licensed professionals recommend?
- ☒ Are they telling everyone the same solution?

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK FOR REAL HELP

If online advice conflicts with your symptoms or recovery plan, contact the **Brain Injury Association of Arizona** or speak with a qualified medical professional. Not sure who to ask? That's what BIAAZ is here for. We'll point you in the right direction.

HELPLINE: 888-500-9165
biaaz.org | info@biaaz.org

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