

## HOW TO MANAGE YOUR EXPOSURE TO NEWS EVENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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In these times of 24 hour news cycles, citizen journalism and a wide access to social media platforms – where videos and items can be posted constantly and without filters – it can be challenging to absorb and reflect on the consistently updated material presented in a news feed. This can leave you feeling very sad, depressed, overwhelmed, anxious and at a loss on what to do.

These feelings may also affect your behaviour, your interaction with others and even your ability to sleep. We need to protect ourselves whilst continuing to use the positive side of social media (e.g., a medium to remain in touch with family, friends and loved ones abroad or as a community connector/mobiliser). Be aware that constant exposure to news feeds and social media can impact the brain and lead to addictive behaviours. Therefore, it is important to take control over the time spent on them.

Below are some practical strategies that can help you to manage your exposure to news events and social media, and help you to change your behaviour or stop harmful habits from developing. We invite you to try out these steps for one day and build up from there.

- **LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE**

Check the news feeds and/ or your social media accounts only 2-3 times/ day. Avoid reaching for your phone/ tablet first thing in the morning and before you go to bed as these are times when we are often feeling most vulnerable. This is especially important for children and young adults who may be confused or spend time worrying about the images they have seen.

- **BE A ROLE MODEL**

Young children learn how to behave from the adults in their surroundings – pedagogues, teachers, older siblings, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunties etc. If they see adults scrolling on the phone/ tablet during mealtimes, bath times, their bedtimes etc., then they will think this is a natural



behaviour and wish to copy you. Model the behaviour on how to safely use social media and navigate the news feeds for your children.

- **SWITCH OFF NOTIFICATIONS**

Switch off the notifications for the news and social media apps on your mobile/ tablet. You will still receive the information, but you will need to proactively go into the app to open it to read the posts, rather than involuntarily and consistently being notified with information. You can control how and when you receive information.

- **PLACE YOUR PHONE IN ANOTHER ROOM**

If you read the news and check your social media apps on a mobile phone, try to use it like a landline telephone for a few hours. This means placing the phone in another room, or away from you – so that it is not on your desk, by you on the sofa, nor in your pocket. You can still hear the phone ring, or if you receive a message, but you have to physically get up and walk to access the phone. This strategy can also stop you becoming 'twitchy' and wanting to check the phone for updates, whilst working on other tasks or engaged in another activity.

- **TAKE TIME TO DISCUSS**

We can all be affected by the news we read. If you, or perhaps your children, are feeling overwhelmed then take the time to discuss with your child, a close friend or family member what you read, how it makes you feel, what action you could take.

- **SLEEP WELL**

If you are struggling to sleep or to stay asleep, then we have some practical activities to help you relax enough to sleep in our wellbeing guide. Find it here: <https://pscentre.org/?resource=the-well-being-guide>

- **ACT**

Action is a powerful way to overcome feelings of powerlessness and anxiety. It reasserts a sense of control and is a useful coping strategy. Make a difference by turning what you or your child are good at, into an act for humanity. Whatever you are inspired to do, can help change the lives of people going through hardship and crisis in conflict settings as well as closer to home in your local community. All acts of humanity and kindness matter.

*Find more resources about Mental Health and Psychosocial Support on the IFRC Psychosocial Centre website, [pscentre.org](https://pscentre.org). Resources include guides and manuals, podcasts, instruction videos and information about upcoming trainings and other events.*

