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Your guide in wellness and mental health

Doomscrolling: How to Break the Cycle



Have you ever picked up your phone to check something quickly and the next thing you know, you've spent hours scrolling through mostly negative news that leaves you feeling anxious or overwhelmed? As our world has become increasingly digital, so many of us have fallen into this habit known as doomscrolling - the tendency to repeatedly consume distressing or emotionally charged content online.

This happens because our minds naturally pay attention to potential threats. While this instinct once helped keep us safe, today's endless stream of headlines, social media posts, and notifications can keep us focused on negative information long after it's helpful. When we're feeling stressed, lonely, bored, or uncertain, scrolling can feel like a way to stay informed or find relief. Unfortunately, it often has the opposite effect, increasing stress while making it harder to put the phone down.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) reminds us that our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are connected. Reading upsetting news may trigger thoughts like, "Everything is getting worse," which can increase feelings of anxiety and lead us to keep scrolling in search of reassurance. A helpful first step is to simply pause and ask yourself a few questions:

- **What am I feeling right now?**
- **What am I hoping that scrolling will do for me?**
- **Is it actually helping?**

Taking a moment to notice this pattern may be more difficult than it sounds, especially as you're just starting, but doing so creates an opportunity to choose a different response. And breaking the doomscrolling habit doesn't mean you have to give up your phone or avoid the news entirely. Some of the small changes that people find work well for them include setting time limits for news or social media, noticing the situations or emotions that trigger scrolling, creating phone-free times before bed or during meals, and replacing scrolling with activities like a short walk, stretch, or calling a friend. It's also worth managing your social media feeds by following accounts that help you stay informed without leaving you anxious or discouraged.

Finally, remember that changing habits does take time. If you catch yourself doomscrolling, try to respond with curiosity rather than self-criticism. Instead of thinking, "I wasted so much time," remind yourself that you noticed the habit, and noticing it is the first step toward changing it. Once you notice it, you can make a more intentional choice. Each intentional choice you make can help break the cycle of doomscrolling and support your emotional well-being and resilience.

Getting Started

If you're looking for other ways to support your resilience, try Learn to Live's Resilience program. Or if you'd like to learn more about your overall emotional health and wellbeing needs, you can take a quick assessment. Do this by scanning or visiting **learntolive.com/partners** and enter access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.