

Managing Media Consumption to Support Wellness

By Crystal L. Brandow, PhD

Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms. Media include television, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, social media, memes, gifs, and more. Media literacy skills relate to intellectual wellness and can help us stay up to date on what is happening around us in a mindful way.

Media literacy is an essential skill - especially right now. There is a lot of information available about the current pandemic, but not all of it is accurate. Misinformation and rumors can be misleading, confusing, or even harmful.

One of the keys to consuming information about the pandemic is making sure our information is coming from a reputable, credible, and reliable source. This can mean the source is not explicitly biased or openly aligned with a specific agenda. For health information, the World Health Organization (WHO) is typically regarded as a reliable and reputable source, as are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams. Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center has also emerged as a leading source of information.

When we see an article or meme that says, for example, “The CDC claims...”, while it takes an extra step and is more time consuming, something we can do to make sure we fully understand the information and can evaluate it is see if we can find that same information direct from the CDC. This is considered going back to the original source.

Information can be misinterpreted, taken out of context, or even designed to be intentionally misleading when repeated elsewhere. Rather than rely on what are known as secondary sources, it can be beneficial to track down an original source of information so we can analyze it and make our own decisions as media consumers.

It can be useful to obtain information about the pandemic from our state officials. Information specific to our state, such as from the Governor’s Office, can help us have the details we need to follow any executive orders, prepare for upcoming phases, or simply be aware of what’s happening in our region.

It is also important for us to know what's going on in our own backyards. Many health departments, mayors' offices, and other resources are available on this level. There are newspapers and other media sources that can provide this local information. Yet, while it can be comforting to turn to our favorite news provider, we shouldn’t generally rely on any one station alone since many news sources have biases and slants.

Finally, it can be beneficial – and support our wellness! – to know when to stop consuming media. It may be time for a break! Although we want to stay informed, taking a step back from the media coverage may be best. Keeping a balance, whatever that means for you, may help with keeping things in perspective.

If we can, we can aim to spend that time away on something positive, on acts of self-care, focusing on wellness routines, or on things we can control.



Healthy Habits *by Ken Pflug*

We are all facing times of transition and disruption in our normal routines as we respond to the coronavirus pandemic. During tough times you can still create behaviors to bring shine into your life.

It's not about motivation or willpower; it's about making it simple and easy. Start with something you want to do, not the "shoulds" but the "wants."

Find an Anchor

Identify something you already do reliably each day, such as getting out of bed, brewing coffee, brushing teeth, feeding your pet, or turning off your computer at the end of the day. This is your anchor moment. It reminds you to do the new behavior. Write down all of your anchor moments. Think of them as opportunities.

Select a New Behavior

What new habit would naturally follow after you turn on the coffee maker? Fill a glass of water, put out your vitamins? Explore options, the choice is yours. Keep the bar low. Make the new behavior easy to do, taking 30 seconds or less, and something you are at least a little motivated to do.

Pick a Celebration

Immediately after you do the new behavior, you celebrate. Celebration creates a positive feeling in you, a feeling of success, that wires the new behavior in your brain. It can be physical, vocal, mental or a combination.

For example, after doing the new behavior, you say to yourself, "I'm awesome!" or "I did it!" You can recite an affirmation of gratitude quietly or out loud, clap your hands, or hum a victory song. You could also picture a cute puppy in your mind. Make the celebration your own and do it with enthusiasm!

Habit Recipes – Putting It All Together

The Recipe is a systematic approach to make the changes you want in your life.

After I (*Anchor*)... **I will** (*New Behavior*)... **Then** (*Celebrate*)

Here are some examples of Recipes:

After I get dressed, **I will** take 3 deep breaths
Then I will say, "Way to Go!"

After I turn off the computer at day's end, **I will** write one thing in my journal that I accomplished today
Then "Do a double thumbs up!"

After I pick up my food from the plate to eat, **I will** feel gratitude
Then "Smile!"

After I notice negative thoughts popping up, **I will** ask myself if they are true
Then I'll say to myself, "I'm awesome!"

After I dry my hands, **I will** think of a friend
Then clap my hands.

After I get out of bed in the morning, **I will** recite one affirmation quietly with emotion and conviction
Then "Put my hands over my heart!"

Remember—perfection is not the goal and not all behavior will take hold. Experiment and be kind to yourself. Don't beat yourself up if you forget to do the behavior—it's part of the process of creating behaviors to **bring shine into your life.**



Relaxing

This month, we draw inspiration from the great Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hahn, a Buddhist monk and peace activist, and founder of the Plum Village Tradition, who reminds us that relaxation practices relieve stress and enhance spiritual wellness.

How to Relax, a review by Patrice Swarbrick

This is a review of a book that is part of a series by Thich Nhat Hanh. I found it to be succinct and quite helpful—reminding me consider the art of relaxation. The book was constructed based on a collection of his notes, suggestions, remarks, and actual meditations designed to assist the reader with learning how to relax.

Thich Nhat Hanh discusses how human beings have “lost the ability to rest.” He reminds us of the importance of breathing, and that we can always return to the “peaceful refuge of our own breath.” Meditation is an opportunity to look deep within oneself but requires us first to “stop” (*shamatha* in Sanskrit) and practice concentrating. In order to rest, we need to stop running, and establish ourselves in the here and now.

The other aspect of meditation is “looking deeply” (*vipashyana* in Sanskrit), to gain the gift of understanding or insight. Being mindful is practicing being truly present in the moment where our “mind is with our actions.”

It is important to create the conditions necessary to practice relaxation. These include taking a relaxed position, where you produce energy for yourself and the world that can lead to healing. Allowing yourself to be a part of a collective energy, for example a collective walking meditation, can get you get in touch with the energy of peace, freedom, healing and joy. In order to cultivate joy, we need only to pay attention to our in-breath and out-breathe to calm our body and mind and restore peace within.

In order to relax, we must focus on our body first and our mind later. This may be a challenge for many people, but an interesting perspective to help with focusing into communicating better with oneself and practicing the awareness of breathing.

Thich Nhat Hanh incorporates “the sound of the bell” as the invitation back to our breathing. He encourages us to find a place in our environment where we can peacefully relax. Essentially, we are all looking to reestablish balance within ourselves. He reminds us that “trying is not mindfulness” and we need insight in order to relax. “Mindfulness requires we bring all our attention to what we are doing.” He gives hope that happiness can come from our awareness, our breathing, and our smiling. “*With mindfulness, we transform our unpleasant feelings into a pleasant feeling of gratefulness.*”

Some of his entries in the book help with letting go, which is vital to facing fear and changing ideas, beliefs, feelings or desires.

Solitude is an important practice in order to let go of sorrows from the past or strong emotions right now. So, in order to let go of worrying, one must “practice to learn to take care of the present moment,” being fully there for yourself and trusting in your ability to handle any challenges.

It is important to set aside time each day to practice mindful breathing and let go of stress. While meditating, you can still be in touch with both the good and bad in life. Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that we do have the power to transform “neutral feelings into pleasant feelings.”

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***“The only moment to be alive is
in the present moment.”***

**-Thich Nhat Hanh
*How to Relax***

Relaxing, continued from page 3

Practicing smiling is one example of a daily practice to bring on relaxation. It is important to have a belief that we can self-heal. We can enter an island of “peace, confidence, solidarity, love and freedom.” We can use mindful walking and breathing to “embrace our pain and sorrow.”

Mindfulness helps us concentrate so we are able to gain wisdom and insight needed to grow.

Another strategy he suggests is to practice “desirelessness.” When we choose this, we can experience peace and ease, because it is the “basis of true happiness.” He cautions us to be aware of our “idea” of happiness, because that can often be an obstacle to real happiness. Anger, self-blame, and business can get in the way. Similarly, effortlessness is seen as a way to be successful in relaxing, when we are able to naturally bring on the relaxation response. Lastly, Thich Nhat Hanh shares meditations including a body scan and a self-guided deep relaxation exercise.

I am eager to learn about the other books in his series and found it to be very useful. I found that it was the type of book that you can turn to any page and find something meaningful and useful. It is a great self-help resource; I highly recommend it!

Visit [Plum Village](#) online for more!

References and Resources

Thanks to Patrice Swarbrick, Ken Pflug, Crystal Brandow for their contributions this month!

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The definition of media literacy on page 1 is from <http://www.medialit.org/media-literacy-definition-and-more/>

For more on habits, see Fogg, B. J. (2020). *Tiny habits: The small changes that change everything*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Check out these Global Wellness Day webpages: <http://www.globalwellnessday.org/about/what-is-gwd/> and <http://www.globalwellnessday.org/about/wellness-resources/>

Global Wellness Day June 13, 2020

Since 2012, the annual [Global Wellness Day](#) sets aside time to reflect on ways we can live a healthier and better life—as individuals, communities, and an interconnected world. This special day celebrates the message that “one day can change your whole life.”

GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY

-  **Walk for an hour.**
-  **Drink more water.**
-  **Don't use plastic bottles.**
-  **Eat healthy food.**
-  **Do a good deed.**
-  **Have a family dinner with your loved ones.**
-  **Sleep at 10:00 PM.**