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THE NOSCROLL PROGRAM

ESCAPE THE DIGITAL CAGE



A COMPREHENSIVE DIGITAL DE-ADDICTION PROGRAM

Volume I

The Framework &
The End Goal

Starting At The End

There's a passage in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, a brilliant and profound work of criticism from the 1980s, that weighs the consequences television was having on society as the dominant screen technology of its era. In it, author Neil Postman offers a perspective shift stating that excess distraction and pleasure pose a far greater threat to us than censorship or oppression do. "*What Orwell feared were those who would ban books,*" he writes. "*What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one.*"

"Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance."

He continues, "*The civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions. In '1984', people are controlled by inflicting pain. In 'Brave New World', they are controlled by inflicting pleasure.*"

Today, in the first quarter of the 21st century, we have an exponentially powerful iteration of this distraction culture and screen technology. The content we consume and the platforms serving it are so fast and loud, and so overstimulating, that they make our heads spin. As we may relate through our own first-hand experience, we reach for our phones without wanting to and lose time in feeds that leave us feeling empty. Majority of what we consume is junk food for the mind filled with outrage and vanity in various degrees. We find ourselves needing more and more time simply to make sense of what we have consumed.

Yet, even when we recognize this, we are unable to stop. As much as these screens distract us, they also disarm our resistance. We know the scroll is eroding our focus and affecting our sleep. We lament the cost of unfinished projects and abandoned endeavors. But still, the hand moves and the eyes follow. So even when we want to be elsewhere, we stay, while what we stay for is barely any good. The grim dystopia outlined above is our reality now.

Digital technology as it exists today is simply too powerful for the ancient human mind. We were not built to handle this volume of novel stimuli or speed of information. Our brains evolved in environments of slowness and scarcity, where spotting berries of a new shade might have been the most exciting thing to happen that month.

Now, we're overwhelmed with thousands of images, headlines, alerts, comments and jingles engineered to trigger some emotion, *any emotion*, just so that we spend time on these platforms. The reward systems in our brains, which are tied to dopamine, were never meant to be activated thousands of times a day. Yet that's exactly what modern interfaces do. They hijack the most primitive circuits of attention and make them fire constantly.

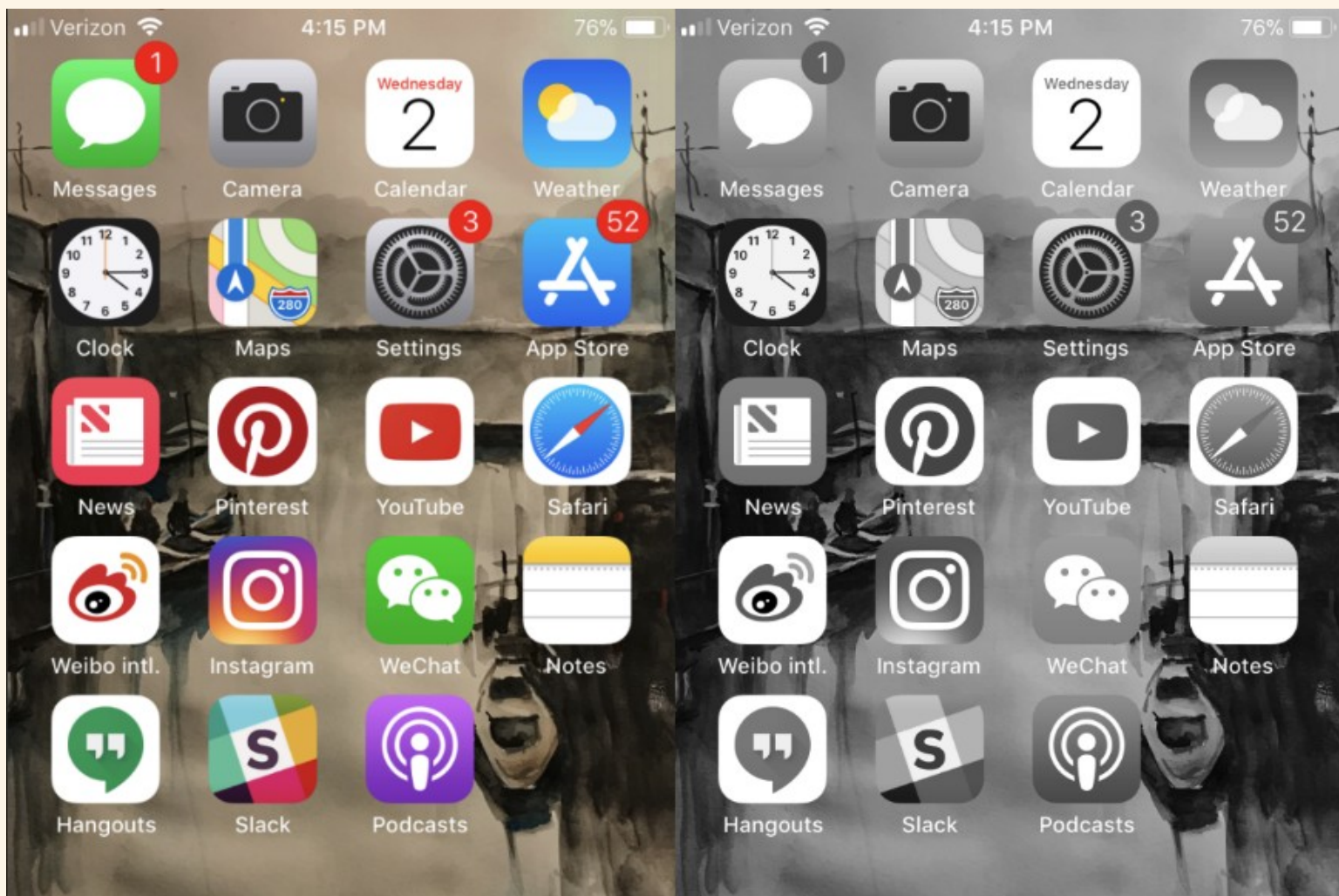
It's an uneven match between our age-old wiring and modern technology, a mismatch that leaves many of us unable to feel sane inside our own minds. The calmness we used to feel has been replaced by a nagging anxiety which neither lets us rest completely nor be fully present. It has become harder to hold attention for small moments like finishing a thought or completing a chore without reaching for stimulation. It feels impossible to sustain attention for long projects that require deep focus for hours or months at a time. The mental space we once used for ...

Volume V

Design Interventions

5. Grayscale: Grayscale is a display setting that desaturates the loud colors from your screen's display and renders the display in shades of gray. This feature works for your phone as well as for other screen types like your tablets and laptop.

When the grayscale setting is activated, the vivid, bright, and electrically alive colors of your screen become muted and quieter. Your screen will appear a dull gray and you may notice the device feels calmer and less compelling immediately, or even boring.



Before and after applying “Grayscale”

The same apps and the same content are still there and they still serve the same functionality but they lose the addictive appeal through overly saturated hues. This weakens *the pull* of the screen and lets you step away from it more easily once the core function of a certain app has been accomplished.

Grayscale the phone is a simple change but its effects work on a deep level psychologically. Color is one of the strongest hooks that digital interfaces rely on to capture attention. Designers use loud, conspicuous ones because of how reliably they draw the eye and hold it. The bright reds of notifications and the glowing blues of messages create a strong contrast and entice your brain to look way longer at the screen than it would have otherwise.

By removing color and turning the screen into shades of gray, the phone loses a large part of its visual pull. The content starts feeling plain and you feel a dullness from the absence of overstimulation. The absence of color changes the *texture* of the experience. It becomes easier to notice how much of the engagement was being driven by visual stimulation rather than by genuine interest of use. Once grayscale is enabled, the feeds start feeling flatter visually and the endless scrolling goes down considerably.

Turning on grayscale is straightforward on most devices as it comes pre-installed as a digital wellbeing feature these days.

For **iPhone (iOS)**:

- Go to **Settings → Accessibility → Display & Text Size → Color Filters**.
- Toggle **Color Filters** on, and select **Grayscale**.

For **Android**:

- Go to **Settings → Digital Wellbeing & Parental Controls** (or Accessibility on some models).
- Look for **Grayscale, Color Adjustment** or **Color Mode → Enable Grayscale**. (On some devices, you can also schedule it for certain hours of the day)

Physical-Level Design Interventions

Physical-level design interventions address our immediate surroundings and the spaces we move through, and the impact that these elements in our vicinity have on shaping our behavior unconsciously. Much of digital use arises out of mindlessness coupled with proximity and availability. A phone on the table or a laptop left open acts as an invitation and a cue that draw attention. Physical-level design interventions are about examining how these external, physical factors make certain patterns more likely than others. It brings attention to the architecture of daily life and how through small shifts in placement, visibility, and accessibility we can majorly alter digital use for the better.

18. Unbundle Your Phone With Real Objects: Over the past two decades, our screens and especially our phones, have become the Swiss Army Knife of modern life. Our phone wakes us up, tells us the time, takes our notes, organizes our appointments, remembers birthdays, does our calculations, helps us place calls, lets us collect information, edits our images, orders our groceries and doubles up as our shopping list while we do so.

It sits at the center of daily life partly because a few functions genuinely require it, but more significantly because we have allowed it to gather hundreds of small ones around it. Each of these roles, when taken individually, feels insignificant, but together they make us so dependent on our phones that we don't have an option but to keep them within reach at all times.

The convenience of the phone is undeniable but each of these functions comes with a hidden hook. Every time you reach for your phone to check the time, you also see a new notification. Every time you open the notes app, you are only one swipe away from scrolling through messages or feeds. The tool for one

purpose becomes a gateway to ten others and before you realize it, the ten-second task you intended to do turns into twenty minutes of distracted wandering.

This digital bundling of functions collapses boundaries that naturally exist in physical life. In real life, a clock only tells time. A notebook only holds notes. A calendar only shows dates. Each object has a clear beginning and a defined role that does not spill into other domains. The phone erases these boundaries entirely. Every action exists in the same space, layered on top of everything else. This creates an environment where attention is constantly switching and scrambled.

An easy way to loosen the grip of the phone is by reintroducing real-life objects for specific purposes and to detach the phone from the dozens of small, everyday roles it has absorbed into itself. For example, a physical alarm clock on your bedside table lets you wake up without immediately checking your phone for messages and email first thing in the morning. It allows the first moments of the day to remain undisturbed by digital technology.

Similarly, a wristwatch or wall clock lets you check the time without being dragged into apps. It restores the simplicity of a glance, of looking at time without it extending into something else.

A notepad and pen allow you to jot things down without digital noise. The act becomes slower and more deliberate and writing something physically also feels more fulfilling. Similarly, a paper calendar or planner shows your days and weeks without notifications.

A physical book or even a Kindle allows a better, less distracting reading experience than a phone ...

Volume II

An Entangled Addiction

05. One App Out, Another App In

Consider this pattern that many of us have experienced first-hand. You decide to quit Instagram as a way to stop hours of mindless scrolling. You say enough is enough and you uninstall it.

For a couple of days it feels like this remedy has worked. But then soon, you find yourself opening YouTube more and more often, watching short reel-like videos on it. Getting pulled into reels on Facebook, a platform you hadn't even thought about in years, or maybe it's Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, Pinterest or Reddit. Before long, the same amount of time you used to spend on Instagram starts migrating onto other platforms.

Instagram is just an example here, but the same applies to various apps and websites today, irrespective of whether it is video games, sports, celebrity news or some other obscure digital habit. Like the mythical Greek monster Hydra, a creature that grew two heads for every one that was cut off, there are other apps waiting eagerly to take the space of the one you just abandoned.

Today, when we remove a familiar outlet for stimulation, the behavior redirects itself with such startling ease. The vast ecosystem of digital platforms presents you with options which may look very different, but underneath the surface, they act the same and cushion the same impulses.

Like old wine in a new bottle, instead of your addiction being remedied and resolved, it just changed costumes. We think we're removing the problem and getting rid of it when in fact the problem is simply re-routing itself, and one app replacing another happens so seamlessly that we barely even notice it. This phenomenon can be noticed once you see the pattern of how the platforms all blur together now.

Instagram has short-form reel content, but so does YouTube and so does Facebook. What was once TikTok's core feature has become everyone else's core feature too. Reddit turned from a text-first forum to one which prioritizes visual content like a social media. Your e-commerce and grocery app give you digital roulette games and scratch cards for discount coupons. The formats, the tactics and the endless scroll are all blending together now and every app is trying to be an attention app.

So when we stop using one and start using another, we are falling back into the same loop because only the names of these apps are different, but the mechanics underneath are the same.

When your brain is rid of one addictive source of dopamine, it searches for another source because it is still hungry for that same neurochemical hit. It's not like the brain stops looking for dopamine completely when you uninstall an app. As Dr. Harry Fisch describes in his book *The New Naked*, dopamine is a kind of "reward currency," one that our brains will work very hard to keep earning, even if the form of the reward changes. So what we're actually addicted to when using these apps, is all the novelty they offer us and what keeps us going is the tiny, unpredictable reward that our brain feels it will get one scroll down, not Instagram or YouTube themselves.

In the physical world, when we try to quit a harmful source of dopamine, we often replace the habit with something less harmful. Someone might quit smoking and switch to nicotine gum and the gum may get replaced by ordinary chewing gum after a few weeks or months. Over time even that fades and gets replaced by a different habit entirely, maybe something like tinkering with a hobby to keep the hands busy. The progression is a series of modest substitutions, where ...

Volume IV
The Processes Of
Human Needs

Single-Channel Digital Use: For individuals with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), an intervention that clinicians frequently recommend is reducing digital interaction down to a single channel of stimulation at any given moment.

When it comes to the ADHD brain, the problem is not solely a deficit of attention capabilities but can be more accurately described as a *difference* in attention regulation. Meaning, the ADHD nervous system tends to be highly responsive to novelty and rapidly shifting inputs. So, when multiple streams of stimulation are present simultaneously on the same screen, each stream competes for attention, creating an effect where attention jumps rapidly from one stimulus to another.

The architecture of a lot of apps or “*livestreams*” today contains a video playing in the center of the screen, with a rapidly updating comment section on the side, a chat window below, a few more applications open in the background, notifications appearing intermittently, recommended videos that scroll endlessly beside the main content, background music layered over dialogue and perhaps the screen is fragmented into two or three smaller screens. This sort of digital screen architecture feels as addictive as an opiate to an individual with ADHD.

The ADHD brain absolutely loves this stimulation overwhelm and gets hypnotized by it. This sort of architecture may look chaotic from the outside but for an ADHD brain, can feel deeply engaging cognitively because it is constantly being fed new signals. Research over the past decade has suggested that heavy digital media use and media multitasking itself can actually produce attention patterns that resemble ADHD symptoms, even among individuals who were not previously diagnosed with the condition, so it goes without saying how primed such architecture and content is for someone who already deals with ADHD.

A highly cited study published in the journal JAMA, followed more than 2,500 adolescents who initially showed no symptoms of ADHD. Researchers tracked their digital media habits over a 24-month period and found a clear association between frequent digital media use and the later development of ADHD-like symptoms. (Ravitch et al., *Digital Media Use and ADHD Symptoms*, JAMA, 2018).

Stating the results concisely, the study found adolescents who frequently engaged with different digital media activities such as social media, texting, video streaming or browsing images were significantly more likely to begin exhibiting symptoms of inattention and impulsivity over time. Researchers believe the mechanism behind this effect is related to how digital environments repeatedly force the brain to rapidly shift attention between competing stimuli. When this continues for a long duration of time, the brain becomes habituated to constant switching, which can weaken sustained attention and impulse control.

Recognizing this pattern leads to our current intervention. This is where the concept of single-channel digital use becomes helpful. Single-channel use means intentionally engaging with one stream of digital information at a time without layering additional stimuli on top of it. For example, if someone is watching a long video or lecture, single-channel use would mean watching the video in full-screen, without simultaneously scrolling through the comments section, or checking messages on your phone during the lecture, or opening recommended videos in additional tabs.

If someone is listening to a podcast or audiobook, single-channel engagement might involve turning the screen off entirely and allowing the mind to listen to the audio without visual ...

Volume III

Macro-Process & The Processes Of Work

Dealing With ‘Non-Work’ Work

Work today contains more “*non-work*” work than the actual role one has been hired for. A significant portion of the modern workday is spent in meetings with team members and clients, setting up and troubleshooting platforms, responding to messages, studying analytics, updating trackers, clarifying expectations, and a laundry list of such tasks, rather than actually executing the core skill one has been hired to perform.

It is now entirely normal to have three to five meetings in a single day, each ranging from fifteen minutes to an hour or longer. There are meetings to “*align*” on the approach of the work and follow-ups to confirm the alignment, which is then noted in writing and circulated via email for approval. The calendar fills up with such meetings before the real work even begins. A single deliverable may require multiple conversations before a line of actual work is produced. This pattern cuts across finance, architecture, consulting, and many other knowledge-based fields where coordination has become as constant as execution.

At the same time, thanks to the way digital ecosystems work and compete for loudness, marketing has grown to rival or even overshadow the product itself. For many businesses, visibility is equivalent to survival. As a result, significant time and energy are invested in maintaining social media presence, designing bright labels, crafting narratives, engaging audiences, optimizing platforms, and analyzing metrics.

In most cases today, more hours are spent promoting the work on digital platforms than refining the product. Teams discuss positioning, branding, reach, and engagement at length, while the underlying product or service receives comparatively less attention. This shift has altered the texture of work. Work today

feels like participation in a communication ecosystem rather than an immersion in a craft.

The solution to this problem exists simultaneously at two levels: the organization's design and your personal behavior. An individual alone cannot solve a structurally "*non-work*" heavy culture. While individual habits and awareness play a role, it's important to recognize that what follows here operates at a different layer altogether. The starting point must be the organization and team layer because that is where most of the excess originates.

But directly criticizing the higher-ups for the number of meetings or framing the issue as burnout or overload, puts leaders on the defensive, especially in environments where availability is equated with performance. A pragmatic approach works better, one that speaks in the language leadership already understands, which is the language of output and delivery.

Instead of positioning the problem as "*too many meetings*" to your seniors, it helps to frame it as "*not enough work time.*" For example, rather than saying, "*My calendar is too full for another meeting,*" you might say, "*I'm noticing that with meetings spread across the day, I don't have any uninterrupted time to complete complex tasks. Could we protect mornings for execution so I can focus better on the crucial part of this project that we are working on currently?*"

It also helps to make the trade-offs visible. If your day contains four hours of meetings that leaves only fragments of capacity for any meaningful work, communicating this concretely, "*With the current meeting load, I realistically have about two hours per day for actual production,*" gives leadership ...