



Heart & soul

Cate Mackenzie, our resident love coach, helps readers open their hearts to relationships they never thought possible



Reconnect with tech-free days

This month, Cate helps readers switch off from technology and turn their attention back to their relationships

Are you glued to your smartphone, even while you're supposedly spending quality time with your other half? If the answer is yes, I'm sorry to say you're not alone.

Recently, a pal told me how she and her boyfriend had gone for a walk, both forgetting to take their mobile phones.

Normally they would have been using their devices to check Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, even emails, all while in each other's company. But, this time, they found themselves chatting away and, without any digital distractions, my friend and her partner ended up having a much deeper and more satisfying conversation.

Now let me tell you another inspiring tale. A friend of mine decided to go on a digital detox for a month, to rediscover herself and have some fun. Planning two months in advance, she took four weeks off from technology and embarked on a walking holiday, went on a retreat and took some dance classes.

The result? She felt that her teenage, playful self had reappeared through the fun she'd been having. Plus, she realised that you can easily return to technology – you don't have to surrender it forever – and is now committed to making phone-free days a regular thing in her life.

It's a sad fact, though, that many of us end up on our computers, phones, tablets and TVs the

minute we get home from work. And we stay there until it's time to go to sleep – and even then, we end up taking our tech to bed with us.

But, in doing this, we are abandoning our loved ones and sacrificing quality time with them. We are forgetting how to connect and interact with each other on a personal level. Too much technology means we are losing the ability to express our feelings properly.

If we want to reconnect with other people on a very real level, we need to actively tear ourselves away from technology.

But how can we do this? Well, by preparing, planning and prioritising, because without forward thinking, we can get tired and lazy and start to rely on our

computers, phones or TVs for entertainment again.

But don't turn to the internet for ideas of how you and your partner can wean yourself off your tech! Try my suggestions below, and use your imagination so you can reconnect with each other. It will be revitalising for you both.

Pull the plug!

Meet your partner after work at a gallery or cafe, switch your phones off for the evening and spend your time together, living in the moment.

Arrange to play tennis or squash together, go for a walk or picnic and leave your phones at home.

Look at taking a joint class – anything from dance lessons to creative writing.

Make an effort to sit down and eat dinner without any interruptions – that means no checking your phones, no telly blaring in the background and no watching YouTube on your tablets.

Finally, have a tech-free holiday. See our off-grid getaways – from calming yoga retreats to mushroom foraging – on page 85. ■

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? Cate Mackenzie is a love coach and couples counsellor with more than 20 years' experience. For more information about her work, visit catemackenzie.com



Lose the distractions and focus on the person

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