

CHALLENGE YOURSELF WITH A CHALLENGE

Contributed by Mandy Enright, MS, RDN, RYT

The new year can be an ideal time to start making changes in your life or set new goals for yourself. Setting SMART goals that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely can make you more likely to succeed. But even with a SMART goal in place, many of us may still need a little extra assistance and encouragement. That's where participating in a challenge can bring an extra level of motivation!

Why Do a Challenge?

There are many different ways to participate in a challenge. A challenge can be done on your own or with a group, with people you know or strangers, they can happen in-person or virtually, and they can be free or have a fee. The great thing about participating in a challenge is that it provides you with guidance, resources, and accountability. If you're not sure where to begin, a challenge can provide you with a roadmap to success.

Are you looking to increase your physical activity level? Drink more water? Improve work/life balance? Cook at home more often? No matter the goal, there's a challenge out there for you!

How to Find a Challenge

The first step is to determine your goal and what you're looking to achieve. From that starting point, there are many ways you can find a challenge including:

- Create one among your friends, family, or colleagues.
- Your workplace may host challenges for employees.
- Check out your community such as gyms, recreation departments, or local businesses.
- Look online or on social media for challenge ideas or hosted programs.

Don't forget about incentives! Whether they're incentives you set for yourself or prizes that come as part of the program, a reward system can help keep you on track. Sometimes a challenge may have an entry fee that gets pooled and awarded to the challenge winner.

Consider Hosting a Company-wide Challenge!

Contact Wellness Concepts to learn about our wellness challenge options including healthy eating challenges, walking challenges, and NEW smoking cessation and habit change challenges! Visit <https://info.well-concepts.com/contact-us> to learn more.

Try This! 7-Day Digital Detox Challenge

Before you start: Let your friends and co-workers know you plan to take a digital break so they don't expect an instant reply to an email, text, or calls. Maybe enlist a few friends, co-workers, or family members to join you in your 7-day digital fast. With the support of likeminded people, you will be more motivated to succeed. Plus, you'll add a little healthy competition and extra accountability to the mix.

Day 1: Embrace the opportunities! Reflect on the time you will have for more fulfilling activities, such as exercise, time with friends, reading, or a nature walk. List the things you want to do with your device-free time. Mentally prepare yourself to reduce screen time each day, adding more time as the week goes on. Device-free time today: One hour.



Day 2: Ramp up resistance to temptation. Challenge yourself to separate from your phone for an extended period of time. Do whatever is necessary to separate from it. Put it in your closet, leave it at home, or simply turn it off. Device-free time today: Two hours.

Day 3: Set your phone to silent. Silence your phone, and you'll be the one in control of when you check it, rather than being in the grip of its jingles and dings. Turn off all notifications (even vibrate). Device-free time today: Three hours.

Day 4: Designate device-free zones. By designating certain areas of your home as technology-free, you will connect better with family members and set yourself up for a more restful night's sleep. Eat all your meals without your device in hand, and keep all technology out of your designated device-free zones. Device-free time today: Four hours.

Day 5: Say goodbye to social media. Social media usage has been linked to anxiety, depression, loneliness, and addiction. In the name of your mental health, make today and the rest of your detox social media-free. Time without devices today: Five hours.

Day 6: Delete time-sucking apps. Start to purge apps that distract you from productive and fulfilling activities in your life. To start the day, think about the apps on which you spend the most time. Do you play games? Check the news throughout the day? Watch silly videos? Choose your favorites, then hold down and delete. Device-free time today: Six hours.

Day 7: Go on a full-day fast. This is the grand finale of your digital detox challenge—a full 7 to 24 consecutive hours device-free. Try to schedule this on a weekend, and if you can, go to a place with poor cell phone reception, so you won't be tempted. Plan a day at a spa or retreat center, visit a national park, or take a day trip to visit a friend and leave your phone at home. At the end of this final day, give yourself a pat on the back—you made it!

At the end of your detox, reflect on the lessons you learned. It's probably not realistic for you to abandon your smartphone or other devices altogether, but you can reflect on some of the above tactics that worked for you and be more mindful about how you are using it—and how it may be interfering with your life overall. There are ways to be mindfully engaged in life while still enjoying the modern conveniences our digital devices bring.

Adapted from <https://www.mindful.sodexo.com/challenge/7-day-digital-detox-challenge/>

Participating in a challenge can help you succeed in reaching your goals. How will you challenge yourself?



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