

TEXT 1

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Faridah T'Eko

Quitting social media changed my life and it would probably change yours too

Over the years I've always periodically "unplugged". I've been notorious¹ for deleting my social media apps for weeks at a time much to the frustration of a lot of my friends and for a long time I've known that the constant exposure to a barrage² of images and opinions was not healthy for me.

5 The first time I "unplugged" was as far back as 2011. I had just graduated from university, was moving to France and had that "fresh start" feeling. One of the things I knew I had to do was change my phone and number (ditching the Blackberry³), and start afresh.

I always look back on my first week in Nice⁴ with such warm nostalgia because it was blissful. Literally no one could reach me other than my mother and perhaps one other person and I spent my days walking around the city and enjoying sorbets on the beach [...].

10 Leading up to the presidential elections in Nigeria, the discourse turned a bit mad online and I had this crystallising⁵ moment where I realised I did not know my own mind. I had no firm opinion on what was going on — at least not based on any deep individual research or introspection⁶ about what would actually be best for our country [...]. I knew I had to take a step back and allow myself to learn and think independently again [...]. I don't necessarily blame the platforms because of course there was also
15 a lot of benefit along the way, but my use of them had to change.

When I came to the realisation that I was totally out of alignment⁷ in my career last year, one of the few silver linings⁸ for me was being able to unplug once again but this time for extended, undefined periods of time. I felt such relief at the thought of an Insta-free, Twitter-free life. That has since turned into 10 months offline which has been indescribably impactful for my mental health and personal
20 development. [...]

Here's how this decision has changed my life. I didn't put this in the title to be hyperbolic⁹ or clickbait-y, I genuinely mean that my life has been significantly altered for the better and I absolutely do credit a large part of this to my reduced social media use. [...]

¹ berygtet

² syndflod

³ smartphone, som ikke produceres længere

⁴ by i Frankrig

⁵ klarsynede

⁶ selvindsigt

⁷ out of alignment: ude af trit

⁸ silver linings: lyspunkter

⁹ fuld af overdrivelse

Despite the fact that I am typically feeling significantly overwhelmed whenever I've made the decision to unplug, surprisingly every time I've done it it's been difficult the first few days. [...] However, after about a week or so the brain begins to adjust and I realise that there are no fires to put out and the Universe has not caved in on itself because I wasn't checking my DMs on Instagram. Not being exposed to the constant horror in the news; women and children being harmed, police brutality, war, injustice as well as my personal struggles with what I call "success content", meant that I remained present in everyday life and got to focus on the reality of my life and support network, experiencing genuine gratitude, hope and clarity on my true values and how I want to design my life. [...]



Not filling the gaps in my day with content consumption¹⁰ has created so much more opportunity for introspection and reflection on the things that genuinely fill my cup and bring my heart joy.

One of those things is of course my relationships with the people that truly know and accept me, warts and all. This has allowed me to think of these people more intentionally and show up for them more deliberately. It's encouraged me to be more vulnerable with them, taking advantage of the sincere support system I have, and also has made me way more present in the life experiences I share with them. [...]

I've always been an avid¹¹ reader and neither partial to fiction nor non-fiction books. However the more apps I joined, the less I could focus on more than half a page of a book at a time!

It was actually surreal to think how much I struggled to make it through articles not to mention entire books after a while! This is because my brain had become accustomed to consuming content in short bursts of mere seconds and being the muscle that it is, had lost the strength and resilience¹² it once had to process long streams of information at a time.

I also came to realise that all my opinions were being formed by strings of tweets, written with confidence by people who themselves may or may not have been drawing conclusions from other people's opinions as well!

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¹⁰ forbrug

¹¹ flittig

¹² udholdenhed