

# refocus on connection

💡 the mindset 🧩 the challenge 🌱 the  
growth ↻ the habits 🛡️ the standards  
💬 the follow-up ⚙️ the change

refocus on  
communication








refocus  
on limits

refocus on  
connection

refocus on  
relationships

**"Once an avid reader, I could barely complete a 300-page novel. Boredom and impatience crept in around page 75, a testament to how strongly my brain had come to depend on the instant gratification of the internet, of Instagram, of Twitter."**

– Alexandra Piedoux, Medium

	<b>the mindset</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>the challenge</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>the growth</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>the habits</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>the standards</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>the follow-up</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>the change</b>	<b>16</b>

# the mindset

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## **Does your brain slow down just because the phone's around?**

A Texas University study showed that participants who had their phone nearby performed much worse on tasks than those with their phone in a different room. The reason? They simply couldn't focus – mainly because part of their brain functioning power was spent on stopping themselves from being on their device. Even when there were no notification pings.

Online behavior is all about toggling between tabs. But with all the multitasking, we're losing our ability to focus. Magazines are swapping in-depth feature articles for short nuggets. It's hard to be alone with nothing but your thoughts.



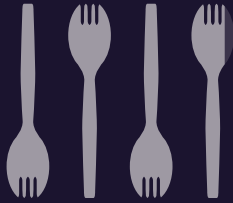
Basic life becomes a challenge. Really listening to our children. Davening with intention. Feeling the joy of a baby's gurgle. Connecting with a mitzvah. Simply being in the moment without thinking about what's next.

Rav Orlowek explains that if not for the hubbub of the street, we'd be able to hear the sun turn. אלמלא קול המונה של רומי נשמע קול גלגל חמה. We would experience life – its truths, joys and meaning.

Rav Wolbe used to tell talmidim to take 30-minute walks each day just to reconnect with themselves. No chazara. No device. Just self.

**Let's bring back the depth, richness and purpose of life. Let's reconnect with ourselves. With Hashem. With what matters.**

# the challenge



98%

of people can't multitask— **they don't do either task as well.**

Strayer, University of Utah studies

82%

of employees **keep their phones within eye contact** while at work.

CareerBuilders





**12  
seconds**

the average  
human **attention  
span in 2000** (or  
around the time  
smartphones hit  
the scene)

**8  
seconds**

the average  
human **attention  
span today**

**9  
seconds**

the average  
attention span  
**of a goldfish**



2016 Microsoft Consumer Study

# the growth

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**I always prided myself on not being addicted to my phone or to social media. And maybe I wasn't. But I was controlled by it.**

My phone was always right beside me, and almost always the first thing I would touch in the morning and right before bed at night. I would easily spend an hour (or two) on Instagram every day. The second I heard a ring, I'd check who was texting. I cared intensely about how many likes I got.

Slowly, I realized my phone was eating huge chunks of my time and mindspace, and something had to change.

No, I didn't throw out my phone, or switch to a basic model.



**Me?!? Addicted?  
No way.**



I took slow steps, one small change at a time. Not listening to voicemails in the car. Not answering texts while with a friend. Waiting five minutes after Shabbos before turning the phone back on. Phone in a different room during davening. Deleting Instagram – probably the hardest and smartest move I made.

**Those changes added up. I have more time in my day now. Thanks to no-Instagram, I have a stronger self esteem and what's private stays private.**

I can't say I never fall back on bad habits. But I'm much more conscious of what technology does to me – and that's half the battle.

– *Hindy, 17*

# the habits

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## **Shul shift.**

Make davening distraction-free by leaving your phone at home. Studies show that your phone occupies your thoughts when on you – even if it's off.



## **Free think.**

Spend a few minutes every day just being – no screens, no music, no people. Let your mind travel.



## **Create distance.**

When doing something important, help yourself focus by moving the phone to another room instead of just putting it on silent.



○ **Pause pings.**

Turn beeps, buzzes and notifications off and get into the habit of only checking in occasionally to give your mind some space.

○ **Pomodoro.**

Set a timer for 25 minutes and until it goes off, work just on the task on hand. Gradually lengthen the ring time, to retrain your brain to focus and deep think.

**Small changes with big impact.**

# the standards

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**Is tech creeping into my standards,  
and making me act in a way I never  
wanted to, or never thought I would?**

**Do I want to...**

- ① Find it hard to focus on just one thing?
- ① Find myself in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei without knowing how I got there?
- ① Pause what I'm doing when my phone pings?
- ① Fail to notice the good things in my life?
- ① Be on the phone a second before Shabbos starts? The minute it ends?
- ① Fear being alone, without my phone?

**Talk it over.  
Think it through....**



**What's my IDEAL way to stay grounded in the moment?** How do I measure if I'm present, and not letting life slip by?

**What has become my current standard?**

Can I focus on the present? Can I think deeper – about who I am, and who I want to be?

*My ideal standard is...*

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*My current standard is...*

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**What's one standard I can change right now?**

How can I stop technology from stealing my focus? Train my mind to stay in the present?

*The one standard I will change right now is...*

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# the follow-up

Learn more about the topic of  
technology and connection.

**Wed., Dec. 30, 8pm CST**

Watch online: [torahanytime.com/focus](http://torahanytime.com/focus)

Call in: USA: 718-298-2077 ext. 53

UK: 0330-1170305 ext. 53

Israel: 072-398-2980 ext. 53

Canada: 647-797-0056 ext. 53



**Harav Nissan Kaplan**

Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Daas Aharon, Har Nof, Yerushalayim

**Harav Yosef Rajchenbach**

Rosh Kollel of Kollel Zichron Eliyahu, Chicago, IL

אין פיזור כפיזור הנפש ואין מנוחה כמנוחת הנפש

**“There is no “scattering” like  
the scattering of the mind.  
And there is no calmness like  
the calmness of the mind.”**

– Rav Simcha Zissel M'Kelm

## Sources

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Steiner-Adair, Catherine and Barker, Teresa H. *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*. Harper Collins, 2013.

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# the change

**Take the first step  
towards the standards  
you wish you had.**

Write down how you will focus on  
connection this week.

*I will...*

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An initiative of  project focus