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# Social Media Temptations

## Mental Logout: Behavioral and neural correlates of regulating temptations to use social media



### Principle

Distracting yourself by thinking of neutral things can lower the temptation to use social media.

### Quote

“Attentional distraction successfully modulated self-reports of Facebook desire.”

### So What - Application

If filling our working memory with neutral things works to overcome social media use temptations then:

1. Drivers could be taught to fill their minds with the routine visual road in front of them when tempted to use social media when driving.
2. When we suddenly find ourselves scrolling Facebook, we could fill our minds with neutral thoughts like shapes or daily routine activities to sustain the choice to put social media down for a bit.

### The Research Story

People will sometimes use social media while driving or instead of sleeping. Three researchers from Tel Aviv University studied how to manage temptations of social media use.

They recruited 29 daily facebook users and changed the passwords to their accounts two days before the experiment to enhance the experiment. They asked participants to come into the lab and put electrodes on their heads to track eye movement, attention to enticing things, and working memory engagement. They were then asked to look at a set of screenshots of facebook images and either think about their own facebook account or think about neutral shapes or daily routine activities. Afterward they were asked how much they wanted to go look at their own facebook accounts.

They were careful to make sure they followed directions and that it was only the thinking task they did. If they closed their eyes or didn't look at the pictures, they weren't included in the data. They asked them before, during, and afterward about following instructions to make sure they were attempting to do the task as asked.

They found that when you distract yourself by loading your working memory with neutral thoughts, you think about social media less and you reduce the desire to use facebook.

Their brain measurements indicated that when you think of neutral things and hold them in working memory, you both think about facebook less and pay less attention to tempting social media images. Thinking about neutral things helps you self-regulate your social media use.

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