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March 2024

Take a Smartphone Sabbatical

UNPLUGGING FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN CONNECTION

The National Day of Unplugging every March is an opportunity for everyone to enrich their lives beyond technology and screens. It's a time for us to set down our phones and think about new and better ways to limit our time on our devices.

Research shows that there are many benefits to limiting or removing excessive screen time from our lives. Detaching from our phones makes us more productive by reducing the mental effort required to resist looking at them. It makes us more sociable because we can better notice how others feel. Shutting off blue light from our screens before bedtime allows the brain to produce melatonin, granting us better sleep. Eliminating digital distractions frees us to be more mindful of the present moment.

Of course, technology is all around us whether we like it or not. According to the Pew Research Center, 44% of U.S. adults under 50 are online almost constantly. I've been in offices where people set notifications on their computers to ding whenever they received an email. These dings were sounding all the time! I had to put headphones on.

I make an effort to unplug, both at work and at home. But as I try to raise my kids in a world full of tech gadgets, I think we parents are all facing new challenges that no one had to deal with in the past. I wonder how we, as adults who may not necessarily have a healthy

relationship with technology, can teach our kids to have a healthy relationship with technology. Here are some tactics that have helped me make unplugging part of my daily routine.

Stow Your Phone When I was younger, if I wanted peace and quiet, I went to the library, where there were no phones and no real connection to the outside world. I replicate this at work by putting my phone in a desk drawer. If it's not sitting in front of you, you aren't as likely to pick it up and start scrolling through your texts or social media feeds. This allows me to be more focused. At home, rather than charging my phone at my bedside, I put it in a completely different room. If I wake up, I'm not tempted to check it.

Screens Off An hour before bedtime at our house, we put all the phones away. To stay off my screens, I read, write in my Five Minute Journal, or get the house cleaned up at the end of the evening. There are some real challenges in this! If it's baseball season, I've usually got the Yankees game on in the background.

Go Gray Putting your phone in grayscale mode reduces the incentive to look at it. The blacks, whites, and grays on the screen are less enticing to your eyes, making Facebook or Instagram less attractive. If you return to the added stimulation of color after two hours in grayscale mode, you can feel your eyes go, "Whoa!"

Healthy Diversions We make a deliberate effort to get involved in activities that take us entirely away from technology. Minnesota is cold in the winter, but we play tennis indoors in a "bubble" — all three of my kids play there on weekends. We might also go skating outdoors or just take time for reading — anything without an ever-present screen.

If you're uncomfortable with your tech devices' role in your life, I wish you the best of luck in regaining some quiet, focused time for yourself and your family. If my experience is any guide, the rewards will be worth the effort!



- Andrew M. Ayers

HOW TO ENJOY THE EMPTY NEST

Welcome to the new phase of life every parent faces, the empty nest. It's that bittersweet time when the last child packs up and leaves only echoes in their once bustling rooms. Suddenly, the soundtrack of your life has shifted from a lively chorus to silence. For 18 years or more, school runs, sports practices, and the ever-present hum of family life framed most of your days. Now, your home feels a tad too spacious.

It's normal to miss the commotion and the constant interaction with your children. But you are entering an exciting new chapter in your life, just like your children are. Your role as a parent is simply evolving. You've been their guide, teacher, and protector for years, and those roles don't just disappear — they transform. Your children will still look to you for support and guidance; this is your chance to be there for them in a new way.

There's no reason to be cut off from your children. Stay connected through texts, FaceTime calls, and good old-fashioned phone conversations. Discuss their new experiences



and share your own. Arranging in-person visits can turn into new traditions for your family. Allow yourself to enjoy this different but equally rewarding aspect of parenthood.

Now, let's turn the spotlight on you. This is your time, a golden opportunity to focus on self-care and personal growth. Remember those hobbies you shelved when parenting took center stage? Dust them off and give them a whirl! Painting, hiking, learning a musical instrument, or even skydiving — there's no better time to explore old or new interests.

With fewer responsibilities at home, you can pack your bags and explore. Whether across the globe or the state, travel refreshes your spirit and broadens your horizons, offering perspectives that can only come from stepping out of your comfort zone.

Life doesn't stop teaching, and we never stop learning. Your nest might be empty, but your life is full of opportunities waiting for you to seize.

ASSET DISTRIBUTION DONE RIGHT

Know Your Options to Help Protect Beneficiaries

Discussions about inheritances are often delicate. However, the goal is to consider the unique circumstances of your children or other beneficiaries. You want to provide for loved ones without offending anyone in the process, yet some are more responsible with money than others, and you want to help them make the most of their inheritance. Here are a few suggestions to set your family up for success after you pass.

No-Contest Clauses

Employing a no-contest clause in your will can eliminate any potential in-fighting or contention to break away from your wishes. It automatically disinherits any contentious family members. If you know your kids enjoy bickering, then adding this no-contest clause puts them on notice to leave their bickering aside, especially in court. Preventing a long, drawn-out court mess is a surefire way to take care of your family. It's an easily added clause; you just have to choose to include it.

A Living Trust

Establishing a living trust is one way to delineate how you want your assets to be distributed after you pass, and you can revoke or change it at any time while you're still around. You can set up a few different ways for the successor trustee to distribute assets from the trust, depending on your family circumstances: outright distributions, staggered, or discretionary. An outright distribution means beneficiaries receive assets without any protections — but an irresponsible recipient might squander the inheritance very quickly. The staggered distribution allows you to set the rules about how and when funds will be distributed or if any triggering events will play a role (turning 18, marriage, etc.). The last option is to give your successor trustee discretionary power to distribute assets — they will decide when and what a beneficiary will receive.



Choosing the Right Trustee

Whichever distribution option you choose, selecting the right person or entity to be your trustee (an individual, a private fiduciary, or a bank) is crucial. They should be trustworthy and fair, especially if you grant them discretionary power. They'll be in charge of making sure your assets are distributed according to your wishes — and their best judgment.

Being firm in your care for others won't make you the villain. Thankfully, you can share your legacy and assets according to your best judgment and discretion. You have several options and tools — just remember, you know your children best.

TAKE A *BREAK*



Chipotle-Inspired Chicken Burrito Bowl

Inspired by EasyChickenRecipes.com

Ingredients

- 2 boneless chicken breasts
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp chili pepper
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 cup white or brown rice, cooked
- 2 cups shredded romaine lettuce
- 1 cup canned corn
- 1 cup canned black beans
- 1 avocado, cubed
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup shredded cheese

For Salsa

- 1 tbsp chopped cilantro
- 1/2 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- 4 tbsp lime juice
- Salt, to taste

Directions

1. Cut chicken into bite-size pieces. In a medium-size bowl, add chicken, olive oil, paprika, cumin, chili pepper, salt, and pepper. Mix until chicken is evenly coated.
2. In a skillet over medium heat, cook chicken for 7 minutes or until cooked through. Set aside on a plate.
3. In a large bowl, layer the rice, lettuce, corn, beans, and cooked chicken.
4. In a separate bowl, mix together salsa ingredients, then pour over the chicken mixture.
5. Top with avocado, sour cream, and cheddar cheese. Enjoy!

BIGFOOT IS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES!?

A Washington County's Unique Hunting Ban

Most people don't consider the legality of Bigfoot hunting, but in Washington state, it's part of the law. In Skamania County, it's illegal to kill the mythological ape. Should someone murder the creature, they'd face a stiff penalty.

Bigfoot — sometimes called Sasquatch — is an elusive ape-like cryptid said to roam the forests of North America. It allegedly has reddish-brown fur, a gorilla-like body, and its namesake big feet. Some claim Bigfoot is the "missing link" between walking apes and our ancestors, who walked on all fours. Most scientists dispute the claim, saying that any ancestor this old likely would've adapted or gone extinct.

Bigfoot was first spotted in California in 1958, and most sightings since occur in Washington state. Per every 100,000 people, 9.12 sightings are in the Evergreen State. That's a third more often than its neighbor Oregon, the runner-up at 6.06. If there were a Bigfoot capital of the world, it'd be in Washington.

On April 1, 1969, the Skamania County legislature enacted Ordinance 1969-01, the first law prohibiting the killing of Bigfoot. Anyone convicted of murdering the cryptid would be classified as a felon and imprisoned for five years. While modified decades later, it set an important precedent: Bigfoot is a protected species.

Tourism picked up shortly after that. Bigfoot mania officially hit the U.S. in the 1970s as directors released films like "Sasquatch, the Legend of Bigfoot." New Bigfoot enthusiasts started to visit Washington in droves, hoping to be the first to find proof of its existence. While locals appreciated the influx of cash from tourism, they didn't appreciate the influx of guns from Bigfoot hunters.

County legislatures enacted a new ordinance in 1984. It further clarified the regulations on Bigfoot and designated the ape as an endangered species. As such, hunting Bigfoot with the intent to kill is illegal. However, the ordinance softened the penalty for hunting Bigfoot, lowering the penalty for poachers to a year in prison or a fine of up to \$1,000.

Every law has some logic; no matter how frivolous it may seem, there's a reason why lawmakers went through the trouble. While this law may seem unnecessary, it protects "Bigfoot" and the Skamania County citizens alike.



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RED BULL DOESN'T GIVE YOU WINGS

MARKETING CAMPAIGN DISPROVED IN COURT

For decades, Red Bull has run the marketing campaign that its energy drink gives people wings. Most assume it's a joke, an exaggeration of the beverage's stimulating effects.

The courts disagreed. A group of Red Bull drinkers in 2014 filed a class action lawsuit against the Austrian company, accusing them of false advertising. Despite the company's claims, they alleged that the drink does not give you wings.

To be more specific, the suit alleged that the ad campaign uses flying imagery to convey that the beverage is better than other caffeinated drinks. While the brand's messaging claims it improves response times and concentration, the suit alleges the beverage isn't much more effective than a cup of coffee.

Red Bull settled for over \$6 million. They also agreed to compensate customers who were disappointed about the drink's wingless results. Such claimants could receive \$10 or

a voucher for \$15 of Red Bull products. But before you go writing a letter to Red Bull for your voucher, know that customers are no longer eligible for this compensation.

In Red Bull's words, they settled to "avoid the cost and distraction of litigation," noting that their ad campaigns and can labels "have always been truthful and accurate." Red Bull denied any wrongdoing.

What Red Bull did was tread the line between false advertising and "puffery," the legal term for extravagant claims about a product. The law allows for some lofty claims — such as "World's Best Coffee" — so long as they are opinions. "Red Bull gives you wings" sounds like a factual statement, so it doesn't fall under puffery.

The energy drink company has continued using the slogan in its marketing in event sponsorship and TV ads. So, while Red Bull may not *actually* give you wings, it did pay out a lot of money in a court settlement over the claim.