3 Tips That Can Help You Read More Books This Year

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With five brands, three courses and a new book in its early writing stages, I can't afford to take life slow. For example, my content agency Express Writers has a staff of 90+ professionals, and there are always new writers to train, clients to onboard and glitches to iron out.

As an entrepreneur, you know what it's like to live a fast-paced life. You're always on the go, doing your best to keep your company running on well-oiled wheels.

What's more, we live in an electronic society that pushes us to our limits. We're filled to the brim with information from the staticky screens we can't ever seem to put down. It's always a green light, and we never stop moving until we fall asleep at night.

But, is this fast-paced life and digital information overload good for us? According to a study by Scientific Reports, it's not. The study goes on to say that when we let electronic devices train the way we think, we lose the ability to process and follow complex ideas. It sounds contradictory, but the more information we suck in through our phones, tablets, and laptops, the less our brains function when it comes to understanding language, staying focused, and dealing with complex ideas.

In an interview with Vox, neuroscientist and founder of the Center for Healthy Minds Richard Davidson said, "Our attention

is being captured by devices rather than being voluntarily regulated. We are like a sailor without a rudder on the ocean – pushed and pulled by the digital stimuli to which we are exposed rather than by the intentional direction of our own mind."

All this begs the question, "Is there an antidote for digital information overload and our ceaseless addiction to checking our phones?"

The answer is yes, and the cure might seem a little surprising and counterintuitive: reading books. But while we could always zone out for hours with a book in our teens, it's simply not that easy today. Most of us have full-time jobs, businesses to run and kids to take care of. Plus, we're constantly bombarded with messages, emails from work and social media notifications.

The key is mindful prioritizing. Here are three habits I pursue to make sure I have time to take a break and educate myself the "slower" way.

1. Step away from my phone in the morning and at night

Since our phones are always within reach, we've developed a nagging habit to check them constantly. In fact, a study by Asurion revealed that Americans now check their phones an average of 96 times per day. That's a 20 percent increase in only two years.

Of course, our fast-paced digital world (plus the COVID-19 pandemic that's made us pivot more than ever to telecommuting) makes it impossible to step away from digital devices for too long. Still, I find that an hour or two in the morning and at night without my phone makes a huge difference in helping me slow my brain down, take a break and recharge with a good

book.

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2. Make book-reading a priority

According to writer Stephanie Huston, the lack of time isn't an excuse for not reading. In her article on *Business Insider*, she wrote about a challenge she took up with a friend to read 50 titles in one year. Although the challenge scared her at first, she found out that a full-time job, a hectic side hustle and frequent travels didn't stop her from accomplishing her goal.

"Not having enough time was a complete bulls– excuse all along," she says. "My endless minutes of mindless phone time has transformed into meaningful minutes of mindful reading time. I read when I wake up in the morning, on the subway, on my lunch break, at the deli after work when I'm waiting for my usual sandwich and before I go to bed every night."

The bottom line is we do have time for reading books. All we need to do is make it a priority.

3. Choose my reading list thoughtfully.

Of course, reading the Harry Potter series or any book that engages your imagination is better than endless phone scrolling. That said, I recommend giving your reading list a few moments of thought to select titles you feel you'll benefit the most from.

To get you started, I'd recommend *The End of the Average* by Todd Rose and, of course, my books on content strategy, marketing, and writing. Absolutely add some fiction, too. My

latest fiction favorite author is Francine Rivers. The goal is to slow down and re-engage your brain, plus pick up bits of useful information to improve your life.

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