

Today I Will Live Electronics-Free

The other day I was taking the bus and I saw the strangest thing: A cellphone rang and the guy reached into his pocket, took it out, and threw it out the window! I was totally shocked. Now, I don't know for sure if the cellphone was his, or if it was stolen or borrowed from a friend, but the action amazed me. I could never let my cellphone ring without answering it.

I am an addict, an electronics addict. I cannot spend a single day, okay, more like a single hour, without checking my email, my cellphone, my home phone and my web page for messages from my friends, my family and, well, even people I don't like! I know I am hooked to my electronic world. Watching this guy on the bus made me ask: How can I become less addicted?

That's when I began planning to get unplugged. I am going to start slow and easy: For one hour each day I will refuse to answer my phones, watch television, listen to the radio, turn on my computer or do anything else that involves electronics. I am hoping to work myself up to a whole day every week, then if that goes well, one week a month and maybe eventually even one entire month per year.

Of course, just the thought of unplugging myself fills me with anxiety: What if I miss something important? When I thought about this, I decided to find out what was so important that I couldn't live without missing it. I made a list: The latest episode of my favourite TV show? I could probably catch it later on a rerun. A call from my boss? She would try again in an hour if it was really important. A text message from a friend? It would still be there an hour later. For every reason I could find to stay plugged in, I found another reason why an hour wouldn't make a difference.

Then, I thought: What if there is an emergency in my family? This could happen, although in my thirty-some years on this planet I've never received the dreaded middle-of-the-night emergency phone call. Okay, so I have my husband answer the phone during the one crucial hour I might miss that .0000001 percent chance of an emergency call.

What will I do with my time unplugged? Well, for the hour of the first day, I've decided to read a book. The next day, I plan to meet a friend for a cellphone-free coffee. Or, I might just take a walk with my dog. Or organize some of the family photos that are lying around. Or enjoy the sunshine in my garden. All of these options seem like a little slice of heaven. It will be fantastic.

Now I wish that I could meet that guy on the bus again to thank him for inspiring me, although I think he was at least partly wrong to throw away his cellphone like that; he could have at least recycled it.

Inspired by the essay "Why I am not going to buy a computer" by Wendell Berry
<http://home2.btconnect.com/tipiglen/berrynot.html> Accessed 18 August 2007.