We’re scattered. With the rise of mobile devices, our attention is pulled in a dozen different directions. Our phones beep and blink, letting us know about notes from friends, email from the boss, ads, and “likes” on our photos. Everything’s always right there, in our hands, on our desks and walls.

Social media have in many ways started to feel awful. People around us saturate our feeds with things with just don’t care about. They make pushy proclamations about politics, or even show up just to harass each other. What was it about online conversation that made for this long slow decline into ugliness?

Do we just put down our mobiles for good? Do we just leave social media? I don’t necessarily think everyone needs to do that. I’ve successfully taken back my attention using a few simple tricks to control my social media use, and I want to share with you the techniques that worked. There are some parts of the digital media landscape we can save—parts we can mindfully choose, to get what we want out of our time online.

In this workshop, I’ll guide participants through a close look at the details of mobiles and social media that wreck our attention. I’ll talk about what exactly it is that these apps and devices do, so we can identify when new ones are trying to take advantage of our attention. Then, taking an inventory of our social media use, we’ll examine what we can change in our settings and device use, and what we can leave behind. We’ll look into ways that making your digital life more secure can also break addictive online habits.

These in-person workshops can be conducted in sessions as brief as 90 minutes, or extended for full-day sessions as desired. This one is particularly useful when paired with a workshop on digital security or keeping public conversations civil. If you’d like to bring me to your community to lead these workshops in the summer of 2020, get in touch!

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