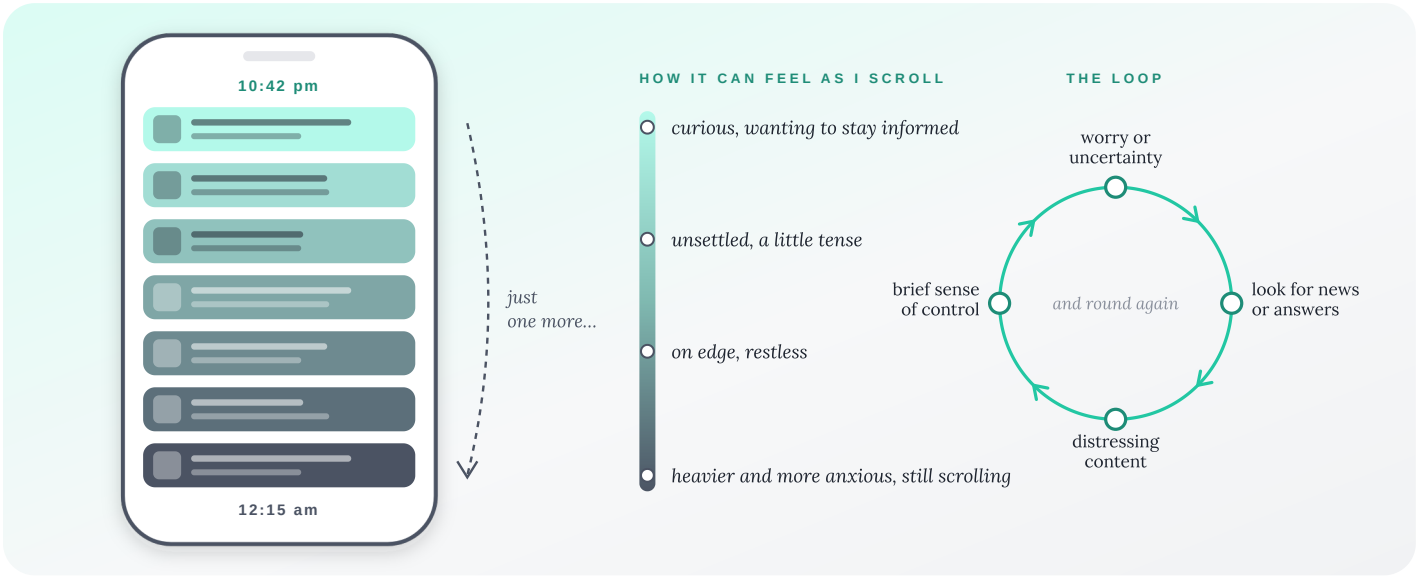
# Doomscrolling

NEWS · ANXIETY · DIGITAL HABITS

*When you can't look away, even though it leaves you feeling worse*

Doomscrolling describes repeatedly scrolling through distressing news or online content, even when it seems to worsen your mood or anxiety. Wanting to stay informed is understandable, especially in uncertain times. This form looks at why it can be hard to stop, and how to find a balance that works for you.




## 01 Why it can be hard to stop

### Searching for certainty

When the world feels uncertain, it can feel safer to keep looking for more information.

### Threat grabs attention

Our minds are tuned to notice potential danger, so alarming headlines can be hard to look away from.

### Feeds have no natural end

Endless scrolling and autoplay remove the usual stopping points.

### It can feel like doing something

Staying "on top of it" may feel responsible, even when it is mainly adding to distress.

## 02 How it can affect you

more anxiety or worry · lower mood · poorer sleep · feeling helpless or hopeless · losing track of time · tension or restlessness · irritability · difficulty concentrating

## 03 Staying informed, or feeling overwhelmed?

| STAYING INFORMED | FEELING OVERWHELMED |
|---|---|
| Checking at chosen times | Checking whenever there is a gap |
| Using a few trusted sources | Following every update and comment thread |
| Stopping once I have the main facts | Searching for more detail, again and again |
| Feeling informed, if concerned | Feeling worse, but unable to stop |

**WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS**

After the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, people who reported six or more hours a day of related media coverage reported higher acute stress than some who were directly exposed (Holman et al., 2014). During the COVID-19 pandemic, days with more news and social media use were associated with more symptoms of anxiety and depression (Price et al., 2022), and higher doomscrolling scores have been linked with greater psychological distress and lower wellbeing (Satici et al., 2023). These findings are mostly correlational.

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## 04 Noticing my pattern

Note a few scrolling sessions. Rate how you felt before and after, from 0 (calm) to 10 (very distressed).

| WHEN | WHAT I WAS LOOKING AT | BEFORE | AFTER |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0 2 4 6 8 10 | 0 2 4 6 8 10 |
| | | 0 2 4 6 8 10 | 0 2 4 6 8 10 |
| | | 0 2 4 6 8 10 | 0 2 4 6 8 10 |
| | | 0 2 4 6 8 10 | 0 2 4 6 8 10 |
| | | 0 2 4 6 8 10 | 0 2 4 6 8 10 |

## 05 When it tends to happen

- ☐ Late at night, in bed
- ☐ When I'm bored or avoiding something
- ☐ Out of habit, whenever I pick up my phone
- ☐ When I feel anxious or uncertain
- ☐ After a major news event
- ☐ When I'm alone or can't sleep

## 06 Ways to set gentle limits

☐ **Choose a window**
Check news at one or two set times, for a set length of time.

☐ **Pick trusted sources**
Use a small number of reliable outlets rather than social feeds.

☐ **Turn off alerts**
Switch off breaking-news notifications where you can.

☐ **Keep the bedroom phone-free**
Charge your phone in another room, if that is possible for you.

☐ **Swap in something else**
Have a short alternative ready: music, a podcast, a walk or a call.

☐ **Ask a check-in question**
"Is this helping me right now, or making me feel worse?"

## 07 My plan

I'll check the news at _____ for about _____ minutes.

When I notice the urge to keep scrolling, I will _____

Instead, I could _____

Someone or something that helps me feel steadier _____

> **A note of care.** If worry about the news is affecting your sleep, mood or daily life, or you find it very hard to cut back, it may help to talk it through with someone you trust or a health professional.

**SOURCES**

Holman, E. A., Garfin, D. R., & Silver, R. C. (2014). Media's role in broadcasting acute stress following the Boston Marathon bombings. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111*(1), 93–98.

Price, M., Legrand, A. C., Brier, Z. M. F., van Stolk-Cooke, K., Peck, K., Dodds, P. S., Danforth, C. M., & Adams, Z. W. (2022). Doomscrolling during COVID-19: The negative association between daily social and traditional media consumption and mental health symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 14*(8), 1338–1346.

Satici, S. A., Gocet Tekin, E., Deniz, M. E., & Satici, B. (2023). Doomscrolling Scale: Its association with personality traits, psychological distress, social media use, and wellbeing. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 18*(2), 833–847.

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