

## Understanding Media's Impact

Modern media is designed to capture our attention through elements of threat, outrage, and urgency. This can keep our nervous systems in a constant state of activation. Prolonged stress might make us perceive media as a source of danger rather than information.

**Goal:** Stay informed without becoming overwhelmed.

## Recognizing Your Media Habits

Start by assessing your current media habits:

- **Platforms used frequently:** Identify which platforms you spend the most time on.
- **Time spent daily:** Estimate the amount of time you dedicate to consuming media.
- **Check-in times:** Consider when you typically engage with media—morning, throughout the day, evening, or late at night.
- **Emotional aftermath:** Reflect on how you feel after media consumption—do you feel informed, anxious, angry, hopeless, energized, or numb?

## Common Generational Media Patterns

Boomers (born before 1965)

- **Common Patterns:** Heavy use of TV news, Facebook, and email forwards; repetitive exposure to the same stories.
- **Supports:** Choose one trusted news source, avoid comment sections, limit repetitive breaking news, and pair news intake with grounding activities.
- **Boundary:** *“Watching more does not mean understanding more.”*

Gen X and Millennials (born 1965–1996)

- **Common Patterns:** Doom-scrolling, engaging in debates, feeling the need to correct misinformation.
- **Supports:** Set specific times for media consumption, avoid online arguments, and replace reactive posting with offline action.
- **Boundary:** *“I don’t have to respond to everything I see.”*

Gen Z (born after 1996)

- **Common Patterns:** Heavy use of TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube; news mixed with humor and activism; emotional whiplash from short-form content.
- **Supports:** Follow fewer outrage-driven creators, balance news with non-political content, and take breaks from algorithm-driven feeds.
- **Boundary:** *“I can care deeply without watching constantly.”*

## Crafting Your Personal Media Plan

Determine your media engagement with intention:

- **Reliable source:** Choose one trustworthy news source.
  - I'll get my news from \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Frequency:**
  - I'll check the news no more than (choose one):
    - Once daily
    - A few times a week
    - Other \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Timing:**
  - Specific time of day for media consumption - \_\_\_\_\_
- **Non-negotiables:**
  - Identify one thing to avoid
    - Comment sections
    - Late-night scrolling
    - Other \_\_\_\_\_

**To maintain balance, pair media consumption with grounding activities (choose one or two):**

- Slow, deep breathing
- Stretching or walking
- Drinking water or tea
- Observing your surroundings
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

These actions help bring your nervous system back to baseline.

**If media exposure becomes too much:**

- Step away from screens.
- Reconnect with your physical environment.
- Remind yourself: "I am allowed to protect my attention."

**Review your media plan weekly:**

- Does it help you feel more grounded?
- Are you acting in line with your values?
- What adjustments are needed?

# Social Media Algorithm Cheat Sheet

Algorithms mostly reward **attention**. What you pause on, react to, watch fully, or share gets interpreted as *interest*. You can train the feed the way you might train a puppy: consistent signals, gentle corrections, patience.

## What Algorithms Notice Most

- **Watch time:** Finishing videos is a loud signal.
- **Pausing or rereading:** Linger counts.
- **Engagement:** Likes, comments, shares, saves.
- **Repetition:** Interacting with similar content repeatedly.
- **Follows and unfollows:** Especially when done in clusters.

## How to See *More* of What You Want

- Watch desired content **all the way through**.
- Like or save posts that feel nourishing or informative.
- Follow accounts that model the tone you want.
- Comment briefly on content you want repeated.
- Search directly for topics you want to invite in.

*This is like watering the plants you want to grow.*

## How to See *Less* of What You Don't

- **Do not linger.** Scroll past quickly.
- Avoid hate-watching or doom-commenting.
- Use “Not interested,” “Hide,” or “See less like this.”
- Mute keywords or accounts when possible.
- Unfollow generously. You are not required to witness everything.

## Emergency Exit for Spiral Content

If your feed has gone sideways:

1. Stop engaging entirely for a day or two.
2. Actively like and follow calming or neutral content.
3. Clear search history if the platform allows.
4. Take a short break. Algorithms forget faster than we think.

## Wisdom for the Comment Section

- Commenting boosts reach **even if you disagree**.

- Reading long comment threads counts as engagement.
- If it dysregulates you, the algorithm already won.

## Boundaries That Help Mental Health

- Set app timers or scheduled check-in windows.
- Keep phones out of the bedroom if possible.
- Notice body cues: tension, breath, agitation.
- Ask: “*Is this feeding me or feeding on me?*”

## A Reframe

These systems are designed to be sticky. The goal isn't perfection. It's **choice**.

*You can train the feed. You can also step away from it.*

# A Grounded Action Planning Worksheet

## Purpose:

Strong feelings about the world often signal strong values. This worksheet helps you choose actions that fit your life, protect your wellbeing, and make a real difference.

## What Do I Care About Most Right Now? (Choose no more than 2–3)

- Safety
  - Justice / fairness
  - Care for children or elders
  - Democracy / civic integrity
  - Environment / land stewardship
  - Economic security
  - Belonging / community
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
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## How Is My Body Reacting to the News?

(Check any that apply)

- On edge / hypervigilant
- Angry / activated
- Numb / shut down
- Compelled to argue or scroll
- Avoidant / frozen
- Steady enough to act
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## If my nervous system is overwhelmed, my first action is:

- Rest
- Limit media
- Talk to someone I trust
- 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding practice
- Delay decisions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*You have permission to pause before acting*

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## How Much Can I Give Without Burning Out? Limits are ethical, not selfish. Choose one.

- 10 minutes a week
- 30 minutes a week
- 1–2 hours a month
- Seasonal or occasional
- One-time action only

**If I exceed this, I notice:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What Kind of Action Fits My Life Right Now?** (Choose **one** lane, not all)

**Low-Energy / High-Impact**

- Writing postcards or emails
- Donating supplies or funds
- Sharing vetted information privately
- Mutual aid support
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Relational / Community-Based**

- Volunteering locally
- Supporting schools or youth
- Faith-based or service groups
- Community meals or events
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Civic / Advocacy**

- Calling representatives
- Attending town halls
- Supporting local advocacy groups
- Voter education or registration
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Creative / Meaning-Making**

- Art, writing, or storytelling
- Teaching or facilitating dialogue
- Supporting cultural events
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

One action I will take in the next **7–14 days**: \_\_\_\_\_

How I'll know this was helpful (not draining): \_\_\_\_\_

*Even when I cannot change everything, I can still:* \_\_\_\_\_

# Contacting Elected Officials:

Many people want to share their views with elected officials but find it hard to get started.

## How to Use This List

Perspective: Describes how a tool is *commonly used* or perceived. This is not an endorsement and does not mean the tool represents your views.

Level of support: How much help the tool gives with wording and delivery.

- High: Most of the message is guided or automated
- Medium: Some structure or prompts are provided
- Low: You write your own message, with little or no guidance

You are encouraged to choose what feels comfortable and aligned with *your* values. Some tools offer help with wording, structure, or delivery. Others simply make sure your message reaches the right office. There is no single “right” approach—choose what feels most comfortable and aligned with your own values.

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## Directly Contact Your Officials:

Website: <https://www.congress.gov/members> and <https://www.senate.gov/senators>

Common perspective: Neutral / official government resource

Level of support: Low

Official government contact pages for U.S. Senators and Representatives. Offers maximum neutrality but requires you to write your own message.

## Tools That Help Draft or Send Messages:

*(Perspective notes are included for transparency. They are descriptive, not endorsements.)*

### Resistbot

Website: <https://resistbot.org>

Common perspective: Progressive / left-leaning

Level of support: High

Helps turn short statements into letters, emails, faxes, or postcards to your representatives.

Very low effort and highly guided

### 5 Calls

Website: <https://5calls.org>

Common perspective: Progressive-leaning, process-focused

Level of support: Medium

Provides phone numbers and short scripts so you can call your representatives. Good for people who prefer speaking over writing and want clear structure.

### **Countable**

Website: <https://www.countable.us>

Common perspective: Center to center-left

Level of support: Medium

Explains current legislation in plain language and allows you to send messages to lawmakers.

Helpful if you want background information before writing.

### **Democracy.io**

Website: <https://democracy.io>

Common perspective: Neutral / cross-partisan

Level of support: Low to Medium

Lets you write your own message and routes it to the correct elected officials. Minimal framing; you control the wording.

### **Heritage Action**

Website: <https://heritageaction.com>

Common perspective: Conservative

Level of support: High

Issue alerts and tools commonly used by people with conservative viewpoints.

### **FreedomWorks**

Website: <https://www.freedomworks.org>

Common perspective: Libertarian / conservative

Level of support: High

Advocacy tools often used by people who value limited government and individual liberty.

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# Screen Time Settings:

YOU DESERVE TOOLS THAT WORK FOR YOU

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Checking your screen time is not about judgment. It is simply a way to see how your phone is being used. With a few small settings, you can reduce unwanted notifications, limit certain apps, and create quiet hours. These changes can support better sleep, calmer days, and more time for the things you enjoy.

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## How to Check Screen Time

### iPhone (iOS)

Open Settings → Tap Screen Time → Tap See All Activity → View daily and weekly use, most-used apps, pickups, and notifications

### Android

Open Settings → Tap Digital Wellbeing & Parental Controls → View daily screen time, app usage, notifications, and how many times you unlock your phone

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## Set App Usage Limits

Go to Settings → Screen Time → Tap App Limits → Tap Add Limit → Choose an app or category → Set a daily time limit → Tap Add

Go to Settings → Digital Wellbeing → Tap the app you want to limit → Tap Set Timer → Choose your daily time  
When time is up, the app turns gray.

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## Protect Sleep

Go to Settings → Screen Time → Tap Downtime → Turn it on → Set start and end times

Go to Settings → Digital Wellbeing → Tap Bedtime Mode → Set your sleep hours

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## Focus Mode - Limit Notifications

Go to Settings → Focus → Choose a mode → Pick which apps or people can contact you  
Set a schedule if you want

Go to Settings → Digital Wellbeing → Tap Focus Mode → Pick apps to pause → Tap Turn on now  
You can set a daily schedule.

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START WITH ONE SMALL CHANGE. NOTICE HOW IT FEELS.

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