

Letting Go of Distractions

Today I deleted several apps from my phone: Twitter, Reddit, Feedly, Snapchat, the N.Y. Times app, and more.

I'm letting go of distractions, or at least learning to.

In fact, I made a list of things I'm letting go of:

- Twitter (except to post my latest articles)
- Reddit
- Favorite blogs & websites
- News websites (most of the time)
- YouTube (or other video sites, unless needed)
- Shopping, buying crap
- Reading more than one book at a time
- Additional projects
- Checking my phone often
- Checking email/messages more than 3x per day
- More than one or two tabs open (unless absolutely necessary)
- Reading while eating
- Extra clothes, books, equipment
- Needing to do something all the time

That's not to say I'm going to be able to let go of these all at once, or perfectly. I'm sure it'll be messy, a journey. And these aren't going to be strict restrictions, but guidelines to help me be mindful. But in general, I have the intention of learning to let go.

Why? Because distractions are a crutch, a mental habit, a refuge for the mind.

We procrastinate through distractions, of course, but we also use it to hide.

Distractions help us hide from:

- Boredom
- Difficult emotions
- Being present
- Things about ourselves we don't like
- Other people
- Discomfort and fear
- Resentment

- Our mental patterns
- The fear of not being busy
- Our worry that we aren't content, that we aren't enough

You might be thinking, "Well, what's wrong with having a place to rest from all of that? Who wants to face those horrible things?" I've found that hiding from these difficulties doesn't make them go away, nor does it help the problem. The only thing that has helped me is to face difficulties with openness, courage, curiosity, and honesty. Giving a difficulty our loving attention actually helps the situation.

So hiding isn't what I want to do anymore. I'm being honest with myself and admitting that I've been using distractions to run, to hide. I have the intention of not hiding, but facing.

You might be thinking, "What's wrong with a little distraction, a little mental break?" I don't think there's anything wrong with letting our minds rest — I'm not trying to be productive all the time. I want to just notice *why* I'm trying to run to distractions, and get in touch with those fears instead. I plan to rest, to exercise, to get outside, to meditate, to be present — not to work all the time. Rest is important, but distractions aren't the only way we can rest. Distractions aren't the only way to have fun. Distractions are a crutch, if we're honest with ourselves.

I have no prescription for life here, nor am I judging others for their distraction habits — obviously I have my own to deal with, and I'm not in a position to judge. I thought only that I'd share my current intention and practice with the people I love. And let you know that I'm doing it with love.