

# Scroll Free September: The tale of a team's preparation

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SHEONA ROBERTSON - ACCOUNT MANGER 16 AUG 2018

If you haven't heard about Scroll Free September yet, it's the RSPH's (Royal Society for Public Health) campaign to encourage people to stop or reduce their personal social media usage for the month of September.

There are a few options for participation levels:

- 'Cold Turkey' – Give up all social media accounts
- 'Social Butterfly' – Take a break from social media at all social events
- 'Night Owl' – Don't use social media after 6pm
- 'Busy Bee' – Don't check personal social media accounts at school or at

work

- ‘Sleeping Dog’ – Give up social media in the bedroom

The positive and negative effects of social media have been prevalent in the news in recent times, with emphasis on the negative effects for young user’s mental health. The RSPH published a report last year named #StatusOfMind, which warned that social media could be fuelling a mental health crisis in young people – with Snapchat and Instagram the worst culprits. Public polling ahead of September found that young users aged 18-34 believe taking part in the challenge will have positive impacts on sleeping, relationships and overall mental health and wellbeing, but also think it will be a huge challenge. The campaign is primarily targeting users of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat.

We began discussing the campaign within our team a few weeks ago as we informed clients of the initiative. We will be keeping a close eye on our client’s social media campaigns in September, so that we can manage the impact (if any) of the Scroll Free month. This re-ignited our team debate– we have some members who are social media lovers and some who are haters, so we openly discuss our varying levels of dependence on our phones. As you do, we all got carried away and pledged full on participation for the month. In the following days, Emma, Faye and Kelly\* all professed that perhaps the cold-turkey option was too much, as they all do enjoy their social media habits. Ross\* on the other hand tends to express a fair amount of distaste and mockery for social media, and remains all for it.

I will happily admit that I have a love/hate relationship with social media. I hate how attention grabbing many of the apps are; the fact that all social media apps have functions where you can chat directly and privately to people means that you have notifications coming from about 834794 different sources and it can be overwhelming. I’m known for being a shocker for a timely reply. I simply think if it’s that important someone will call – the feeling of needing to reply right away is partly why I think phones are taking over people’s attention. If I am with people and someone begins to scroll, I think this is the height of rudeness: in my opinion that is essentially the same as if someone pulled out a book and began to read it. The thing that worries me most about people’s relationships with social media is that I can see some folk are losing the ability to be present in the room, in the

conversation that they are physically part of. Having said that, I bloody love Instagram and genuinely do enjoy my time spent scrolling.

Following my team's pledge to participate in Scroll Free September, we are yet to all settle on our varying degrees of commitment to the month. I believe in an attempt to spur us on, Ross, being the champion of anti-social media taught us how to check our current app usage. On an iPhone, if you go to Settings>Battery, you can check your app usage for the last 24 hours and 7 days. His plan worked – a shocked Emma took matters into her own hands when she saw how many hours had been lost to the good old 'Gram and deleted the app. That lasted for 3 days. Luckily for our team's amusement, it's quite easy to convince her to delete it again, and we now have a tally on our board at work for Emma's "Insta free days" [FYI, the current count is 0].

I am aware we are perhaps making light of a subject that for some, is very serious. This is certainly not because I don't understand how real the negative effects of social media are, but because I wholeheartedly believe that talking openly about our relationship with social media is crucial. On a regular basis, I count my lucky stars that I was out of high school before social media properly had its moment, because I really don't know what impact it would have had on my self-esteem during those teenage years. I'm sympathetic to those now going through that messy age of figuring out who they are, and looking for affirmation and validation in the 24/7 world of social media. Hopefully the Scroll Free September campaign will help make some people's relationships with social media healthier.

Anyway, I'm away to check Instagram for the 7<sup>th</sup> time today.

\*All names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals in my team

Sources:

[RSPH](#)

[The Guardian](#)

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