



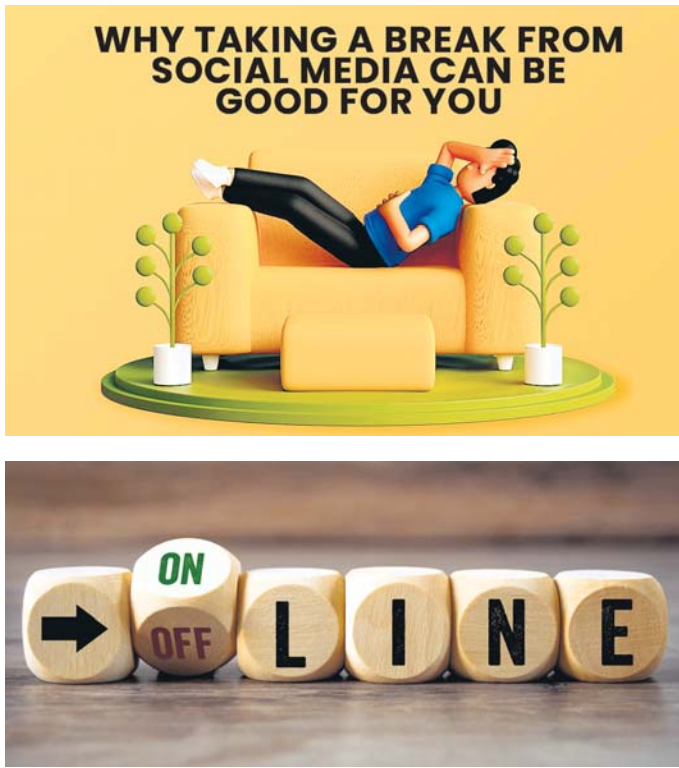
World Snow Day

World Snow Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in January each year. The inaugural celebration started in 2012. World Snow Day, however, was the second phase of the FIS (The International Ski Federation) campaign to get more kids involved with snow sports. The first phase, which was called 'Bring Children to the Snow,' began five years earlier. The purpose of World Snow Day is to encourage families to make lasting memories with their children, as well as, to offer opportunities for kids to have experiences with winter sports like snowboarding and skiing.

#LIFESTYLE

Need A Break From Social Media?

Yes, taking a social media break can be tough but it's not impossible.



After declaring that she was taking a social media break, shortly after 18 hours, Selena Gomez was seen back on Instagram. Does this remind you of someone you know or just you? Well, most of us are guilty of doing this! We say that we are going to delete this app, deactivate our profile and never return, but fail miserably, ending up *doomscrelling* on the same platform the very next day.

Yes, taking a social media break can be tough but it's not impossible. The FOMO, the urge to share something important or the inability to fill the void, the reasons are ample to fail at it but a little help can go 'a long way'. So, here are a few guidelines on how you can take a social media break successfully.

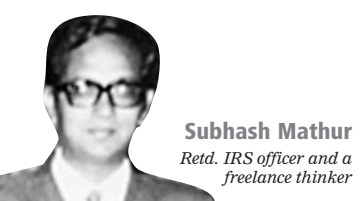
- Set clear goals:** Define the purpose of your break. Whether it's reducing stress, increasing productivity or improving mental health, having clear goals will help you 'stay focused.'
- Inform your network:** Let friends and followers know about your break. This reduces expectations and ensures understanding from your online community.
- Time limits:** Set specific time limits for your break. Whether it's a few days or weeks, having a clear timeframe helps you stick to your plan.
- Disable notifications:** Turn off social media notifications to minimise temptations and distractions during your break.
- Find alternatives:** Replace social media with other activities. Pick up a hobby, read a book or spend more time with friends and family, offline.
- Uninstall apps:** Consider removing social media apps from your phone. This makes it less convenient to access, reducing the likelihood of mindless scrolling.
- Create a schedule:** Plan how you'll spend your time during the break. Structure your day with activities that don't

- Reflect:** Use this time for self-reflection. Understand your relationship with social media, identify triggers and consider making long-term adjustments.
 - Connect face-to-face:** If possible, meet friends in person. Real-world interactions can provide a refreshing break from virtual connections.
 - Evaluate and adjust:** Regularly assess your progress and make adjustments as needed. If certain aspects of your 'social media use' negatively impact you, consider permanent changes.
- In case, you are pondering whether taking some time off social media is good for you, here are some benefits:
- Improved mental health:** Reduced exposure to negative news, comparisons and online drama can lead to improved mental well-being during and after the break.
 - Improved productivity:** Without constant interruptions from social media, individuals often experience heightened 'focus' and 'productivity' in various aspects of their lives.
 - Better sleep quality:** Disconnecting from social media, particularly before bedtime, can enhance sleep quality by reducing exposure to blue light and potential stressors.
 - Enhanced real-life connections and communication:** Taking a break can lead to increased face-to-face interactions, strengthening personal relationships and fostering a sense of community beyond the digital realm.
 - Reduced stress and anxiety:** Minimising exposure to negative content and alleviating the pressure to stay constantly connected can contribute to lower stress levels and reduced anxiety.
 - Improved self-esteem:** Stepping away from social media diminishes the inclination to compare oneself to others, promoting 'healthier' self-esteem and a more 'positive' self-perception.

Netaji tames Masterji - What a tussle!



True to his words, Netaji asked me to attend functions outside my house only twice, once to deposit my nomination papers and another time to meet the Party President, Nathu Lal ji, who was passing through Bansur.



Subhash Mathur Retd. IRS officer and a freelance thinker

retired as a maths teacher from the Govt. school, Bansur tehsil, Alwar district, in Rajasthan.

I was living a staid life with my youngish wife, Savita of 55 years.

My father had left behind a self-contained two-bedroom cum study house, with drawing-dining and a modern kitchen. It had two modern washrooms as well as a toilet in the backyard.

Savita and I lived a peaceful life in this mansion of ours. By 'I', I mean 'me,' that is *Murari Lal Jangid* but universally known as *Murari Masterji* or just plain and simple 'Masterji'.

Our married daughter, Kamala, lived close by in Tijara.

Our son, Prakash, was due to pass out as a Mechanical engineer from an Engineering college in Sikar, shortly.

Once in a while, some students, from the nearby schools, would drop in for guidance. Else, it was a placid life.

In simple words, we were living a quiet and peaceful life, content with our circumstances.

But it was too good to last. Something had to give.

And, it sure, did!

With disdain, *Netaji*, not only did not accept my 'No,' but also sent seven of his staunch supporters the next day to take my signatures on the form to become a candidate of the 'Temple party' for Vidhan Sabha. The 'fab seven' cajoled, persuaded, argued and mildly threatened but left my house only after 'I had, voluntarily, signed up.'

A phone call on my landline from *Netaji*, a former student, shattered my peace for all times to come.

Simply put, *Netaji* proposed that *Masterji* should agree to be a candidate for the Assembly elections from Bansur on 'Temple Janata party symbol' which was a *Cheetah couple* looking up to the sky.

I outright refused but the damage had been done.

As I feared forever!

Netaji never accepted a 'no' from anyone even while he was in school. I didn't expect any better now.

Netaji was adamant.

Even teachers used to dread his outbursts as he was fond of using several pejoratives in between his harangues.

But for reasons which I could never fathom, *Netaji* respected me a lot.

I also reciprocated his sentiments by putting in some effort to make him clear matric. *Netaji* left the school as Surendra Pal Gujar



alias 'Netaji,' passed matric in his fourth attempt.

Big title!

Collectively, the school breathed a sigh of immense relief. With disdain, *Netaji*, not only did not accept my 'No,' but also sent seven of his staunch supporters the next day to take my signatures on the form to become a candidate of the 'Temple party' for Vidhan Sabha.

The 'fab seven' cajoled, persuaded, argued and mildly threatened but left my house only after 'I had, voluntarily, signed up.'

I spoke loudly to myself, "Yaar, it's okay that I have signed up but I will never stir out of the house and thereby, forfeit my deposit."

Lovey!

Surprisingly, *Netaji* accepted all my 'harsh' conditions except that I had to leave the house for tendering the form before the Returning officer.

So I signed.

And surprisingly, I went back to my humdrum life except for following the election news more closely in the local papers.

Shortly thereafter, many banners with my photo suddenly appeared in the city. Some posters were plastered in public places. I got these pulled down on an ASAP basis by talking to the local head of the 'Temple party.'

#RELUCTANT DREAMS

True to his words, *Netaji* asked me to attend functions outside my house only twice, once to deposit my nomination papers and another time to meet the Party President, Nathu Lal ji, who was passing through Bansur.

Savita again told me with crystal clear clarity, 'Murari Lal Masterji, stop dreaming! Stay close to reality and live with your eyes open.'

These women! They don't let one dream and stay puffed up even for a few hours.

On the counting day, Savita and I had gone to Alwar to attend the marriage celebrations of a close relative and were oblivious to the trends.

I was very pretty sure that I didn't stand a chance. The gap was far too much to cover up with the front runners.

But once again, a call from, who else but *Netaji*, shattered my composure and my peace.

Excitedly, *Netaji* informed me that I was leading the count and the *President of the party* would be speaking to me shortly.

Be available. Don't switch off.

How have the fortunes changed so dramatically?

Notorious *Netaji* was lordling over his almost virtuous maths teacher, *Masterji*!

Strange are ways of fortunes.

Sure enough, I won.

Should I celebrate? I opted for the quiet route.

But peace was shattered shortly when the local leaders and supporters of the 'Temple party' descended upon my house, dancing to DJ ditty tunes like '*Naatu Naatu*, *Lungi dance*, etc.

With the excitement growing every second, Savita abandoned her stiff upper lip and called upon the local *Halwai*, *Bholu* and ordered mounds of sweets and *samosas* and tons of tea.

I asked for a better car and promptly, a *Suzuki Invicto* was placed at my disposal.

I even got the portfolio that I wanted.

Once the fuss was over at the *Raj Bhawan*, I drove over, in Invicto, with Savita and children, Kamala and Prakash, to my office.

I gingerly sat down on the chair, in the spacious chambers of the Minister, with the title, "MURARI LAL JI JANGID, B.Sc. B.Ed. MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR KHADI GRAM UDYOG."

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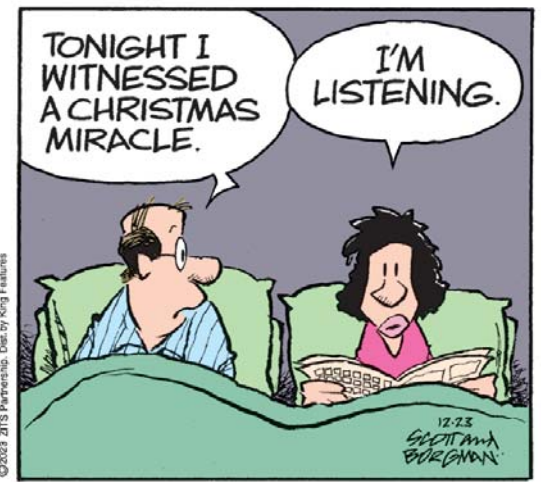
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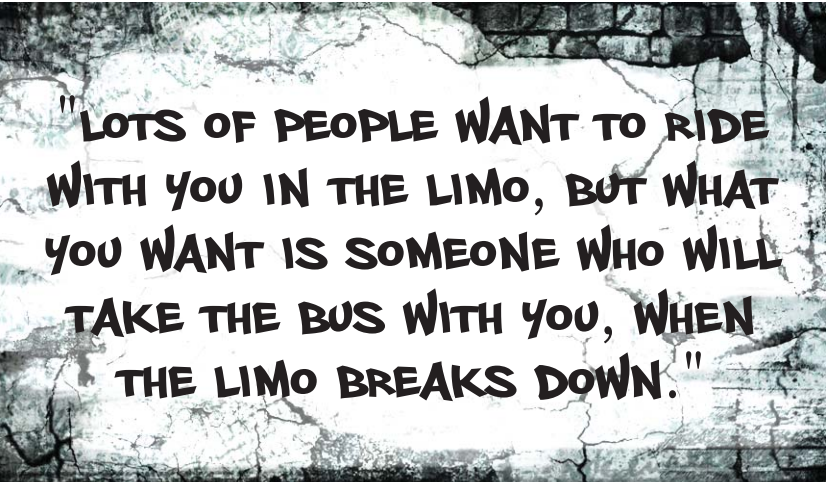


By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

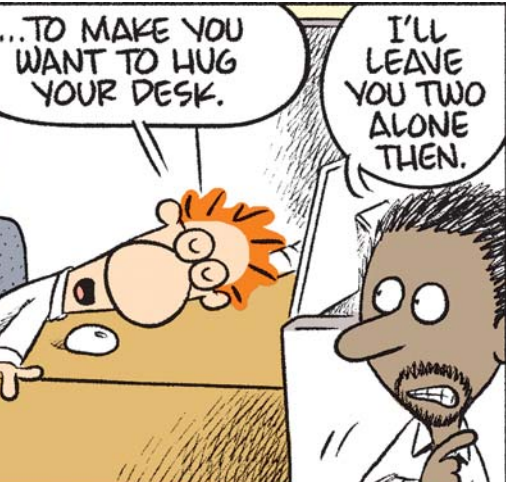
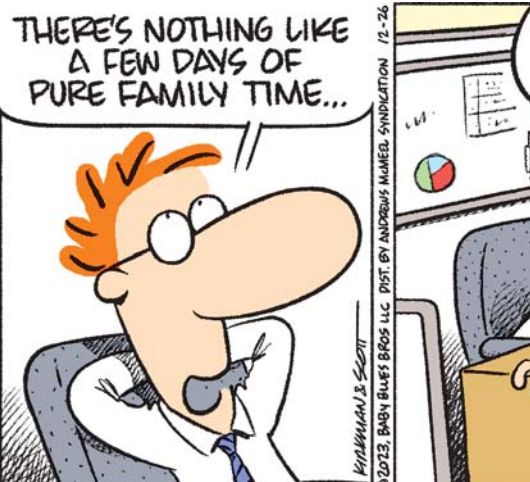
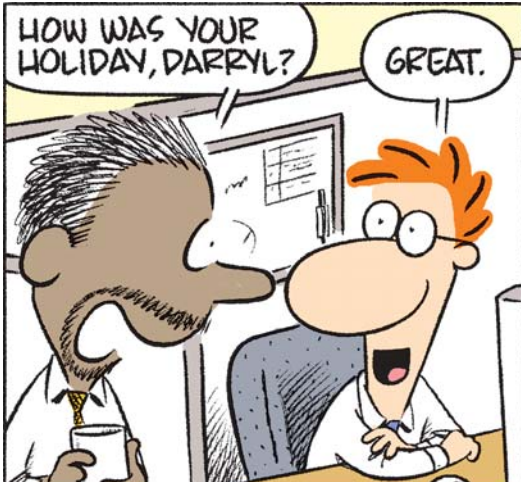
ZITS



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



Will teens follow their elders' advice?



Recent data from the American Library Association point up some surprising choices by today's *Generation Z* (ages 13-25) compared with those of *Millennials* (ages 26-40). According to their study, *Gen Zers* are not only reading more books per month (presumably for pleasure) than are *Millennials*, but are reading more print than their older brethren."

Some of the researches showed that most students readily acknowledge that they learn and concentrate 'better' when 'reading print.'

Could subsequent generations come back to print? Time will tell.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

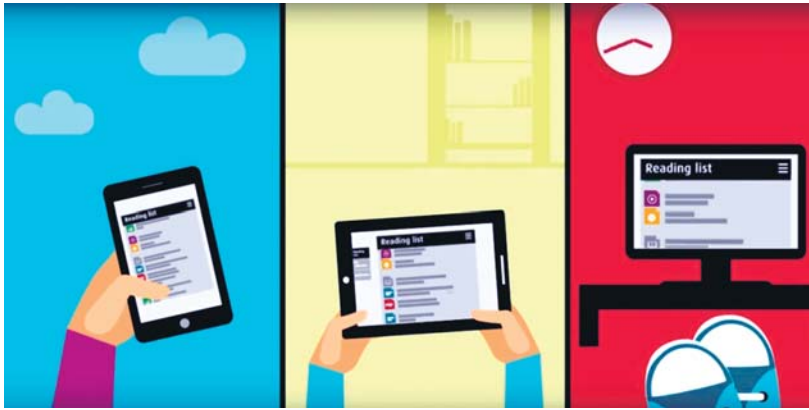
Digital reading and comprehension

In 2011, scientists reviewed 99 studies exploring the effect of print reading on children's comprehension skills. As one would expect, they found a sizable one. The more the kids were exposed to print reading, the better able they were, to understand and recall what they were reading. Moreover, print reading appeared to promote a virtuous cycle. As young readers consumed longer and more complex texts, their reading skills improved, prompting them to pursue even more complex written works, further boosting their abilities.

They found that digital reading improves comprehension skills but the beneficial effect is between six and seven times lesser than print reading and it's least for children.

Great exposure to digital reading activities may detract early readers from building a strong reading foundational base in a *critical period* when they are shifting from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn.'

Why does *digital reading* appear to be far less beneficial? The scientists cited numerous speculations from the literature. First, the linguistic quality of digital text tends to be of much lower quality. When chatting, we often use informal language with simplified vocabulary and we ignore grammar rules. Content is also typically far shorter, not requiring focus and retention to understand and fully enjoy longer works with intricate narratives and numerous characters.



According to Naomi S. Baron, an emerita professor of World Languages and Cultures at American University, a book's physical properties might also uniquely boost information retention.

"With paper, there is a literal laying on of hands, along with the visual geography of distinct pages. People often link their memory of what they've read to how far into the book it was or where it was on the page," she wrote.

"The physical properties of a book or magazine, the smell, the looks, the feel, can also make reading more pleasurable," she added.

Lastly, when reading content on digital sources, distractions from social media, YouTube and video games are often just a click away, hampering full comprehension of texts. In a recent study of undergraduates at West Virginia

University, two-thirds admitted 'checking social media "often" or "very often" while reading.' Just over half of respondents said that social media negatively impacted their reading habits while 45% said that it had a neutral effect and 2.5% said that it had a positive effect.

Because youth tend to have impaired impulse control, they can be more susceptible than adults to distractions, when engaging in digital reading. They also are less likely to have mastered vocabulary and grammar rules, meaning that they will be exposed to more 'rudimentary' writing on social media and in chats with friends. It's for these reasons that the scientists recommend that parents and teachers limit kids' time with digital content or at least, emphasize printed works or using basic e-readers with ink-screens.