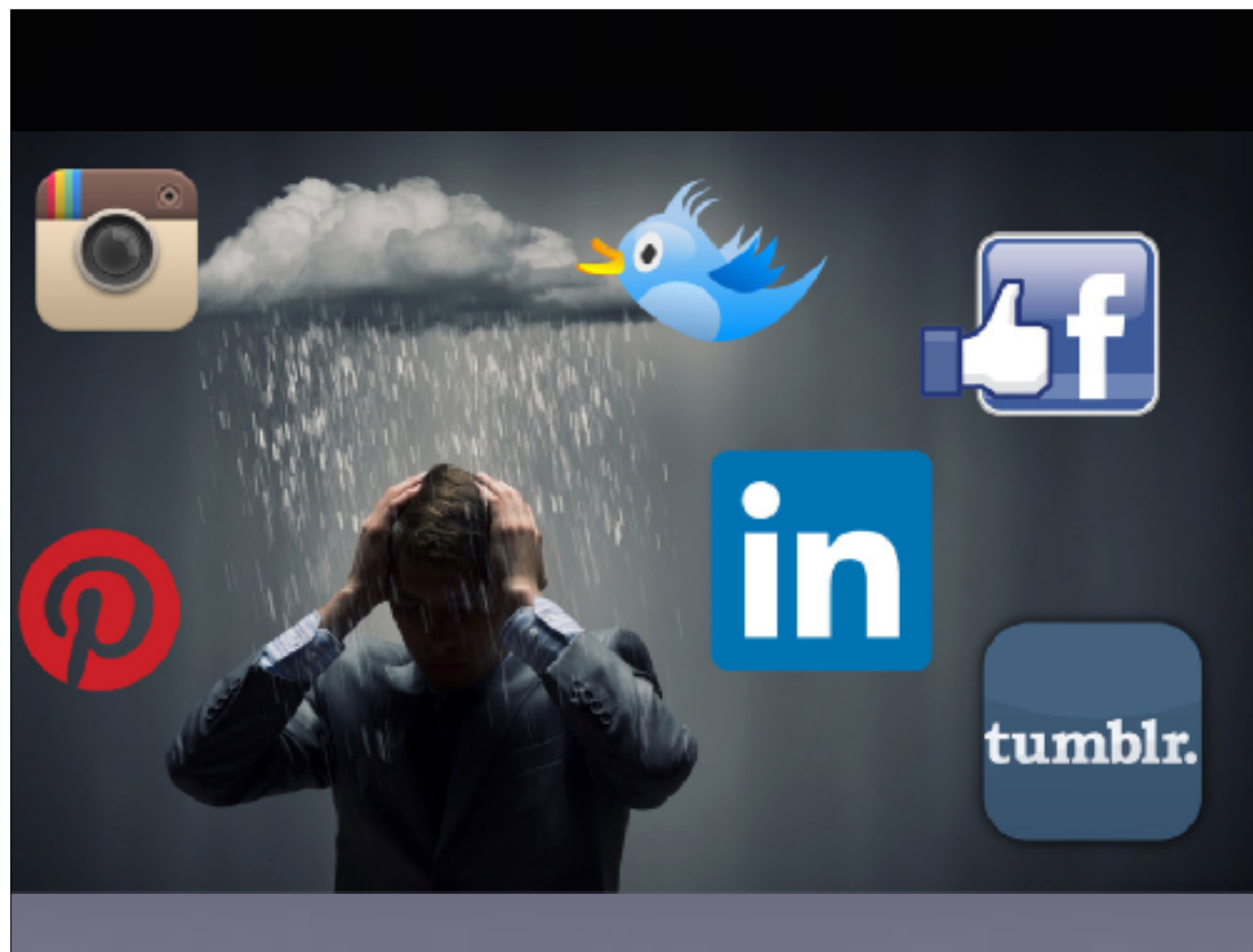
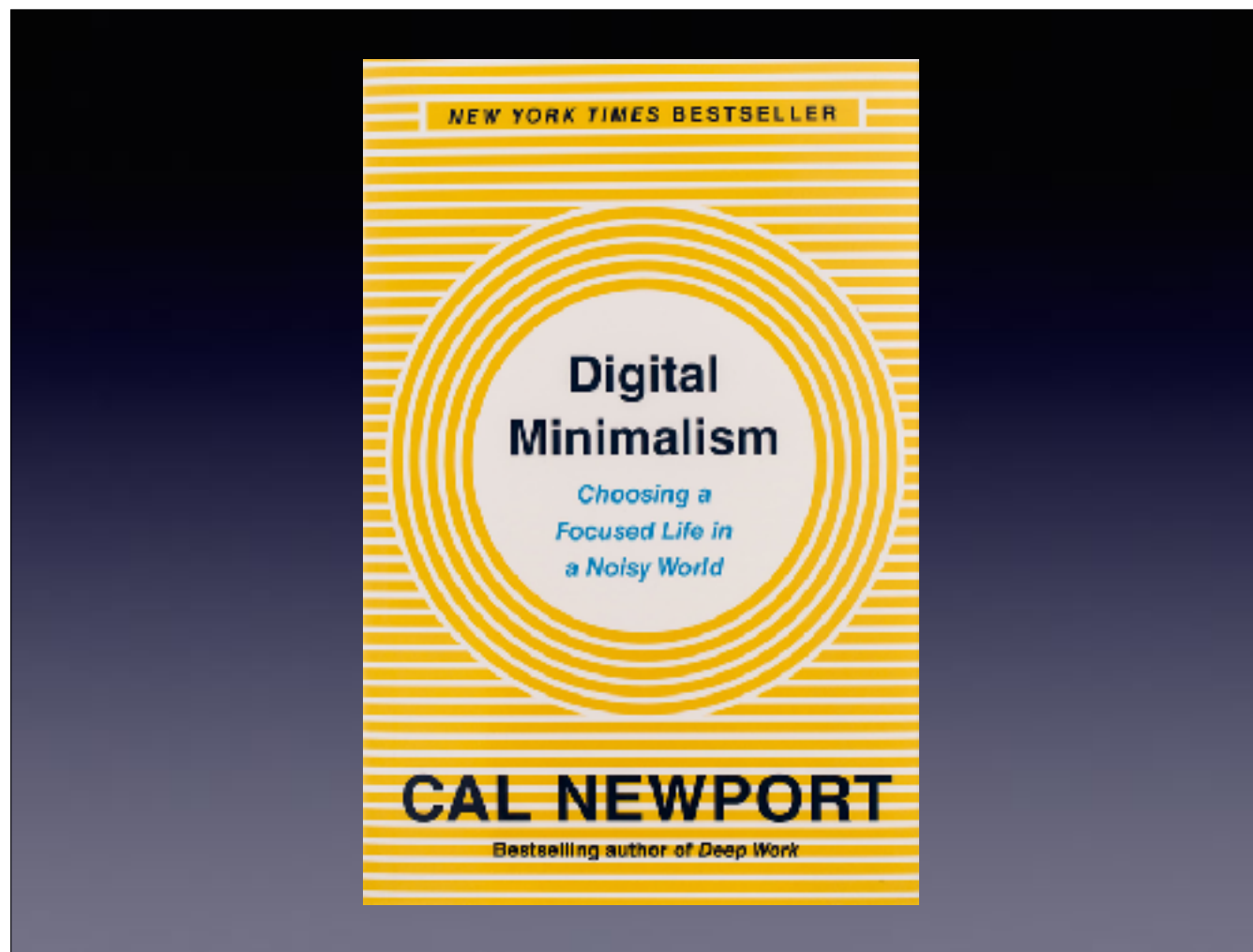




Many people, ourselves included, spend a lot of time online. But all these hours don't necessarily make for a happier or satisfying life.



What I'd like to to this evening is introduce you to a book I read earlier this year. It really resonated.

Cal Newport

- Computer Science Prof at Georgetown
- *New York Times* best selling author of seven books, published in 35 languages
- Other titles include *A World Without Email* and *Deep Work*
- Regular contributor to the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *WIRED*
- Has *never* had a social media account

A World Without Email: Reimagining Work in an Age of Communication Overload 2021

Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World 2019

Deep Work, Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World 2016

Messages: 1) he is ok, still has friends and knows what's going on in the world 2) not only is he ok but he is better off (happier, more sustainability in his life, more successful professionally 3) wants to convince more of us to believe the same thing.

My goal is to get you to think about it and perhaps read the book yourself.

Digital Minimalism

- A philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected activities that support things you value
- Minimalists don't mind missing out on small things
- What worries them more is diminishing the large things they already know for sure make a good life good

The idea is to be very selective on which specific technologies you employ and how you go about using them.

Solitude Deprivation

- A state in which you spend close to zero time alone with your own thoughts and free from input from other minds
- Reading a book, listening to music, watching a film all fit into this category
- Instead, turn off your phone, take long walks, write letters, and let your thoughts wander

Bennett Principle

- A practice in which you prioritize demanding activity over passive consumption
- Use your skills to produce valuable things in the physical world
- Seek activities that require real-world, structured social interactions i.e. *conversation* and not mere *connection*

Create a painting, build a coffee table, learn a musical instrument and make a recording.

Conversation is a rich multi-media experience: facial expressions, tone of voice, body language. In-person is best but this includes video conferencing as well.

Principle #1

- Digital minimalists recognize that cluttering their time and attention with too many devices, apps, and services creates an overall negative cost that can swamp the small benefits that each individual item provides in isolation

Principle #2

- Digital minimalists believe that deciding a particular technology supports something they value is only the first step
- To truly extract its full potential benefit, it's necessary to think carefully about how they'll use the technology

For example, instead of checking each email the moment it arrives, you could choose to do emails from 11:00 to 12:00 each morning.

In saying this I'm realizing how difficult it might be even for me, but I'm thinking about it.

Principle #3

- Digital minimalists derive satisfaction from their general commitment to being more intentional about how they engage with new technologies
- This source of satisfaction is independent of the specific decisions they make
- Minimalism tends to be immensely meaningful to its practitioners

This is consistent with the Simplicity Movement, the Slow Food Movement, and Marie Kondo's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, *Less is More*. Keep only those things that truly give you joy. By removing clutter you can make room for more important things in life.

Embrace “Slow Media”

- When the digital attention economy is shoveling more clickbait toward us and fragmenting our focus, we should be more mindful in our media consumption
- Limit your news consumption to set times and the best writers
- Avoid “breaking news”
- Higher quality “Less is More”

This is similar in concept to the Slow Food movement.

My ritual is to check a summary newsletter from the Economist, CBC News App, and Apple News in that order, and maybe twice per day. Everytime I click, pennies are going to someone.

Apple News is laden with click bait and can be a time waisting rabbit hole.

The point is to be more conscious and deliberate about what you are doing.

Social Media Paradox

- Social media makes you feel both connected and lonely, happy and sad
- Addiction is defined as a condition in which a person engages in a behaviour for which a reward provides compelling incentive to repeatedly pursue despite detrimental consequences
- Checking “likes” is the new smoking

Objections to Quitting

- It would be an act of extreme luddism, like staying with a black rotary phone
- *Nonsense* - social media is not a fundamental technology but a source of somewhat unsavoury entertainment (and addiction) that offers you shiny treats in exchange for minutes of your attention and bytes of your personal data that can be packaged up and sold

Objections to Quitting

- It's vital to my success in the 21st century economy; opportunities won't come my way
- *Nonsense* - Markets value the ability to produce things that are rare and valuable. People will find you and you'll be able to write your own ticket. Markets dismiss things that are easy to replicate and produce small value

Any 16 year old with a smart phone can post to Social Media.

Cal Newport himself is an example of someone without any Social Media presence can be very successful.

Objections to Quitting

- It's harmless and fun, I don't really use it that much, I might miss out
- *Nonsense* - Social media brings with it well documented, significant harm. If you spend large portions of your day with fragmented attention, it can permanently reduce your capacity for concentration

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out.

Other Facebook Harms

- The more you use Facebook, the more lonely and isolated you are likely to be
- Constant exposure to your friends carefully curated positive portrayals of their life can lead to feelings of inadequacy and depression
- Mismatch between the ways our brains are wired and constant stimuli exposing ourselves to intermittent rewards

Their life is great and my life sucks. The truth of the matter is that everyone's life sucks to a certain degree but people tend to only post the good stuff.

It's like bringing a slot machine home and using it throughout the entire day. This short circuits the brain and has cognitive consequences, making you feel miserable. The canary in the coalmine is the college campus. Along with the smart phone came an explosion of anxiety related disorders. You would have to identify a compelling positive that would outweigh these significant negative harms.

This is why so many teenage girls feel suicidal, which became apparent during the Congressional hearing on Facebook the week before last.

Digital Declutter

- If you think you have a problem ...
- A practice in which you define your technology rules, take a thirty-day break, and gradually reintroduce technology
- *Caveat:* If you begin decluttering low-value digital distractions before you've filled in the void they were helping you ignore, the experience will be vexing

What is life like without social media? It can initially be difficult and is like a detox process, but after that things settle down and become positive. First, it can be quite productive. Cal rarely works past 5 pm. If you treat your attention with respect, you can do one thing after another with intensity. Intensity can be traded for time. It's surprising how much you can get done in an 8-hour day if you are able to give each task intense concentration. Outside of work, things can be quite peaceful ... reading a book without the constant hum of stimuli and the background hum of anxiety that comes with that.

“Attention Economy”

- Describes the business sector that makes money gathering consumers' attention and then repackaging and selling it to advertisers

Remember if the service is free, you are the product.

Join *The Attention Resistance*

- Delete social media from your phone
- Consider turning your devices into single-purpose computers
- Use social media like a professional
- Embrace slow media
- Dumb down your smartphone

For example, you could choose to use your desktop computer for email and your iPad for consuming news.

There is a lot to be said for the old flip phone that was simply used for phone calls and not all of the other distractions. Some believe that Steve Job's introduction of the iPhone has had a huge detrimental impact on our society.

The philosophy expressed here is not necessarily for everyone but certainly worth thinking about.