

INTELLIGENCE

ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTAL RISK POOLS

ZOOM FATIGUE IS THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG: Why Digital Well-Being is Critical

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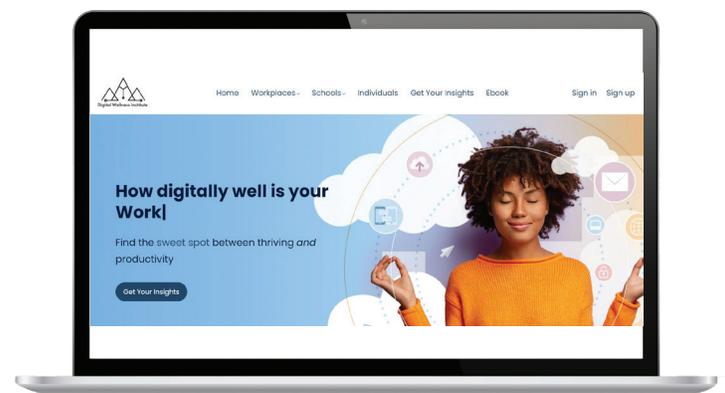
The craft of leadership continues to evolve in an ever-changing world. Because technology is both a blessing and a curse, there is a growing need for pool leaders to be a positive influence when it comes to digital well-being.

Digital well-being is the ability to use technology to support our lives and thrive in the digital age. It's the state of using technology to amplify good mental, emotional and physical health. **Digital dysfunction** is when technology use has more unhealthy outcomes than it does value.

The tension between digital well-being and dysfunction impacts us all. Modern life and technology mean that we spend much of our day responding to what author Mark Rego, M.D., in his book "[Frontal Fatigue](#)," calls "unrelenting cognitive demands" that have changed how we use our brains.

LEARN MORE

You can find out more about the importance of digital well-being through the Digital Wellness Institute at: www.digitalwellnessinstitute.com



**Understanding
digital dysfunction
— and how to
protect against it —
is the only way you
can invest in your
own digital well-
being and the digital
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you support and
who support you.**

Our minds exist in different states depending on the input and activities we undertake. We are processing experiences on a continuum that starts with an empty mind, then moves through stages of a quiet mind, a partially active mind, an active mind, a full mind and an overwhelmed mind. Throughout a day we shift gears through these different states. But modern life and digital demands are changing the nature of the continuum.

Today, you likely spend much of your day in the full mind and overwhelmed states — and it is exhausting the processing abilities of your pre-frontal cortex. The pre-frontal cortex manages your attention and focus, impulse control, prospective memory (your ability to plan, remember and complete a task) and cognitive flexibility. As if the erosion of those things isn't enough, frontal fatigue also increases vulnerability to mental health issues.

As a pool leader, the impact of frontal fatigue and the potential for digital dysfunction is of paramount concern. Frontal fatigue impacts you, your team, your governing body, your members and essentially everyone around you (including your family, friends and support network). Understanding digital dysfunction — and how to protect against it — is the only way you can invest in your own digital well-being and the digital well-being of those you support and who support you.



There are seven technology enhancements that are particularly noteworthy in managing digital well-being.

Think of each of these digitized norms on a spectrum with well-being at one end and dysfunction at the other. Your goal as a leader is to be thoughtful about your expectations, work policies and culture to help each person you influence to make use of technology in ways that keeps them closer to well-being.

(Hint: setting a good example in your own behaviors and practices is key.)

	Digital Well-Being	Digital Dysfunction
Managing Relationships	Social applications allow us to connect with hundreds of people, including personal and professional relationships. In the past, we would likely lose track of people who are no longer in our daily lives. Today, we can know what work they are doing, their relationship and family status, their hobbies and their breakfast preferences.	There is great value in broadening our relationship networks. But when taken too far we trade quality of relationships for quantity of connections and suffer from lacking the depth in human connection we require to be sustained.
Coordinating Activities	Technology does a great job of helping to manage a calendar and facilitating collaboration with others through meetings or shared documents.	All this efficiency can cause us to compress activities without building in adequate rest time, which is critical for deep and creative thinking. If we keep increasing how many tasks we can accomplish in a day, the quality of work we do will suffer.
Communication	There are many technology applications that permit us to “talk” to anyone at will and with very little effort. We can send words, emojis or memes across a variety of channels, at any time regardless of proximity.	This is meaningful if you're staying in touch with people you care about. But it also means there is a cacophony of channels where you'll hear from digital criminals, salespeople for products you don't want and automated contacts from all over the world that beg for your attention.

Digital Well-Being

Digital Dysfunction

Self-Learning

The Internet provides a library of free content on a scale that seemed magical, if not impossible, just 25 years ago. We can learn about anything that comes to mind in an instant. We have all had the YouTube experience of learning to make a repair, mix a recipe or practice a new hobby.

On the dark side, the content we find can be false, biased, unhealthy or even dangerous. The ready availability of self-learning can put us in an echo chamber we don't even know we are in.

Convenience

The phrase "there's an app for that" exists for good reason. Technology helps us accomplish an amazing list of tasks with far more ease than used to be the case. Think about how relatively easy it is to order groceries, graph your workout performance, find new music, track claim payments and status, calculate the contribution rates for a new member or reconcile payments within an account.

The danger of convenience is dependence and even complacency. We rely so heavily on the convenience of our apps that we can be easily frustrated by a forgotten password or having to learn a new version of software. We can become tense when a technology tool malfunctions, even if the problem lasts only for a few minutes.

Safety and Security

Digital devices and applications can help us keep ourselves and our homes safer. We can track family members and be tracked, so people know where to find us if there is a problem. We can learn about our teenager's unsafe driving habits. Our elderly parents can call for emergency help instantly if they fall.

Then there is the other side of the digital security coin. Cybersecurity and fraud are pervasive problems. In some cases, digital criminals prey on the most vulnerable populations and their lesser familiarity with digital devices or protection tools.

Physical and Mental Health

You can use the internet to self-diagnose any ailment in ways that just weren't possible a generation ago. You can also verify any piece of medical advice and you can likely find a credible opinion that differs from the one you were given.

This new access to health advice comes with risks. You can self-diagnose incorrectly or find medical information that is not true. You can fail to seek medical attention when you should because you think you've found the answer on your own.

Here are some ways you can help yourself and others:

1. Allow (or even expect) team members to **occasionally step away** from their devices and the grand efficiency of our digital environment, because sometimes going slow is incredibly valuable.

For more on this topic, read Daniel Kahneman’s book “Thinking, Fast and Slow.”
2. Encourage the people you work with to **set boundaries around their time and tasks**, and to respect the time boundaries set by others.
3. **Guard against digital dependence and complacency** in order to build your pool’s resilience and ensure continuity of operations even when the unexpected happens.
4. Use your influence to **temper the individual stress** that can accompany a system upgrade or malfunction, and even the anxiety that comes from a team member who is taking medical advice from Dr. Google. You may not control how someone responds in these circumstances, but you can certainly offer guidance and reminders in group and individual meetings or other interactions you have.
5. Appreciate the **impact of your own behaviors and habits on those around you**, because what you do gets noticed. Are you seeking information sources on the internet that counter your biases instead of playing to them? Do you prioritize digital safety and security (or do you have your email password on a sticky note on your computer)?

Simply raising digital well-being as a topic worthy of discussion is a valuable leadership step forward. When others see you care about making digital well-being a priority and protecting against frontal fatigue, they too will be more thoughtful about this topic.



Leaders must understand that for every positive that exists in technology use there is a corresponding negative to be considered. We must become more aware of the impacts modern life and digital tools have on the physical and mental well-being of everyone we know and engage.

About the Author



SCOTT KLOSOSKY is AGRiP’s 2022 Digital Transformation Resident. In this role, he helps pools advance their learning in and capabilities for digital strategy and leadership. In addition to 15 years of consulting work through Future Point of View, Scott is the founder of numerous successful technology startup companies. He describes himself as a “hybrid of a technologist and humanist who strives to find a hopeful future in blending the two.”