

WHAT DOES MEDIA FASTING REALLY MEAN?

Newcomers may have a tough time wrapping their heads around what true media/tech fasting entails.

There is a distinction between *abstaining from our addictive media* and *fasting*. Abstaining from our addictive media is where many of us want to end up, but that is not something we can usually attain in early recovery from media addiction. The lines are too blurry for us to make those kinds of decisions. Most of us need to start with fasting from all unnecessary media, and we need to continue to fast for a long time to allow our bodies and minds to detox from the effects of addictive media use. This sets the stage for taking on a new way of living.

FASTING is what is required in Closed B2B Groups. This means NO USE OF ANY MEDIA OR TECH that is not ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY for work, school, or essential family needs (like setting up doctor appointments or dealing with messages to or from school). This means (and this list is not exhaustive) no TV, movies, news, streaming, social media, gaming, porn, nonessential shopping, word games, dating and meet up apps, Internet use for unnecessary reasons, phone or tablet apps, or gambling.

For many people, this fast *could*—and probably *should*—include podcasts, music, fiction books, magazines, online reading, audiobooks, meditation apps, sports apps, unnecessary messaging apps, or any other sort of input that you get lost in or spend more time on than intended.

This may be different than other media/tech programs' definitions of a media fast, but this is how we have found people can achieve true media/tech sobriety. REMEMBER: *Always* ask yourself, "*Is it REALLY necessary?*" We have found that the more sober we are from ALL unnecessary media, the better chance we have of maintaining long-term sobriety by working the 12 Steps with a clear mind.

Some people say, "*But my family/partner/friends watch a movie together each week. Can I do that?*" The response is: How about suggesting that your family does something else during that time, like play a board game, dance together, go to the park, go for a walk, or some other activity which doesn't require media or tech. There is a list of *300 Things to Do Other Than Use Media* on the MAA website under the Literature tab. Look at it, or have them take a look, and pick some things to try out.

Then there is, "*But at my mom's house, her TV is always on.*" We suggest you ask her if it's okay to turn it off while you are there, so you can spend some time talking with her or doing something else together. If you are somewhere where you absolutely cannot get them to turn the media off, then either be in a different room or turn your back to the TV (which is quite uncomfortable and often not successful, so be careful). It means either not facing a TV in a restaurant or finding restaurants where there are no TVs on. It means not watching ball games and often not listening to them either. It means IF IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.

This is not meant to be easy nor to be a punishment. It is meant to detox you, so you can get your life back and be receptive to your Higher Power's guidance. If you are not ready for this commitment, then you may need to try recovery in some other way than Closed Back to Basics.

Eventually, after months and months, or even years, of fasting, some of us move to a recovery phase of just staying away from our addictive media/tech. We may find that there are some forms of media or tech that are not addictive to us. It becomes very individual at this point, and using your sponsor's guidance and your accountability can help you discover which media and tech usage does not put you in danger of a binge or relapse. Be careful, however, because it can be a slippery slope.