



TOUCH IT.

# TOUCH GRASS

Nov 2025

*Go on, touch it.*



**12** crafts to fill your year with...

**Parasocial Relationships:**  
Are you guilty?

An exclusive insight into  
*cold water therapy*

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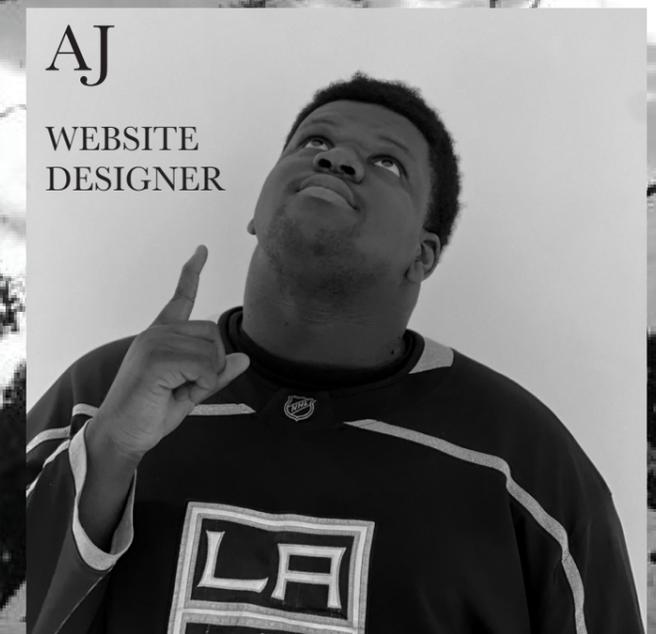
*“Welcome to Touch Grass, the magazine created to help people aged 18-30 navigate identity and mental health in the digital world.*

*Inside this month’s edition, explore the world of parasocial relationships, online standards and escapism, the effect that sport and exercise can have on mental health, and much, much more.”*

*- OUR EDITOR IN CHIEF*



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# THE INTERNET'S IMAGINARY FRIENDS

*Don't exclude yourself from being engaged in a parasocial relationship - the term that once described crazed celebrity stalkers front pages, now has a nuanced meaning which we all fit the criteria for. As difficult as it may be in a word of 'can we normalize', it's time to face the facts, and cut of the internet's imaginary friends...*

To quote your parents, 'you are what you eat', and with the amount of content we consume online, it's no surprise that for many Gen Zs, public figures feel like extensions of themselves.

We watch them take us through their morning routines while we brush our teeth, we take their advice when they say we MUST try the products they have been gifted. The dynamic feels understandably personal to us viewers, and for some, can be an accessible source of comfort and familiarity.

"Parasocial relationships are available whenever we need them" Dr Veronica Lamarche, a social personality psychologist at the University of Essex, says,

*"You can turn to your favorite content creator and get that feeling of solace where and whenever you need. Real-life doesn't have those boundaries."*

DR VERONIA LAMARCHE

*"In the middle of the night, if you're feeling a bit sad, you can turn to your favorite content creator and get that feeling of solace - whereas it might be inappropriate to wake up your best friend to*

*call them for a chat. There aren't those same boundaries."*

A 2024 study by Dr Lamarche revealed that despite prioritising emotional support from friends and family, virtual PSRs were valued more than relationships with "real" acquaintances. We then question, why aren't social media sourced PSRs afforded the same urgency as other symptoms of being 'chronically online'?

## PSRs of The Past

In 2006, a study by psychologists David Giles and John Maltby introduced the 'Celebrity Attitude Scale', which identified three levels of celebrity worship which have increasing levels of intensity, and controllability: entertainment-social, intense-personal and borderline-pathological.

Borderline pathological PSRs, characterized by the disillusionment of reciprocated feelings from the public figure. Rare as these cases are, extreme cases can result from these types of PSRs, 'crazed celebrity stalking' headlines are likely to come to mind when you hear the term 'parasocial relationship'.

The head of the LAPD's stalking unit Det. Jeff Dunn, described how singer-songwriter Sheryl Crow's stalker, Ambros Kapos, was motivated by a delusion based on the Greek epic, The Odyssey, in which he was Odysseus rescuing his Penelope.

"He only sees himself as a good guy, not a stalker. Typically, in stalking cases, they turn dangerous when the stalker is rejected, and the delusion is shattered. The tipping point is rejection and humiliation." - Det. Jeff Dunn

He suggests that this delusion was partially innocent, as these cases often occur involving viewers with preexisting mental health

issues, for whom their muse is unattainable.

PSRs formed via social media are the opposite, and often cause the mental health issues, rather than occur because of them. Questioning why you haven't reached borderline pathological status yet?

As it turns out, those engaging with social media funded PSRs are unlikely to develop borderline pathological tendencies, as they already feel that they are able to interact with the public figure enough...

## Parasocial Interactions

A significant change that social media has contributed to how PSRs develop is through the perceived interactions that viewers can have with public figures via shares, likes, follows, comments etc., which are referred to as parasocial interactions (PSIs).

Much like how you Facetime your best friend to vent about your nightmare manager, ask advice for relationship issues, or show off a shopping haul, influencers ask viewers to comment opinions on their videos, or interact at all.

This continuous stream of pseudo-friendship leads viewers to foster a sense of involvement, with the 'real time' updates, and while aware that they will never meet, the possibility of being replied to or followed back transforms traditional one-way media consumption into an interactive and comforting, albeit non-reciprocal, exchange.

Research by Ofcom finds that as of 2025, 22% of UK adults listen to podcasts, with stable growth specifically among 15-24-year-olds, the top podcast for this category being American

podcaster, comedian, UFC commentator, and actor Joe Rogan's 'The Joe Rogan Experience' with 11.7 weekly UK listeners. One of the podcasts critics, Tucker Lieberman, said:

*"People who are in a parasocial relationship with Rogan are used to thinking of him as some guy who just 'says stuff'. He is, by contrast, a very wealthy professional media figure who can help sway elections."*

It's a valid concern: Do PSRs incite a sense of trust between the public figure and audience, which allows mundane 'chattering' to be taken for gospel by young, influential listeners.

Ofcom's research also found that 83% of regular listeners value the convenience of podcasts and enjoy listening whilst completing other daily tasks.

This raises another concern; People aren't actively picking the type of media they want to see. This means that we a susceptible

to absorbing all sorts of unverified chat, from people we haven't even actively chosen to listen to. Take back your autonomy!

## Why Don't we Hear About Them?

Listen, we know it's not revolutionary to say that phones can be harmful for young people.

If you're anything like 80% of the UK, who according to MI Blue Daily's 2025 study, check their phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night, the various detriments of phone overuse will have been regurgitated in your direction hundreds of times.

It's unlikely however, that the social media formed PSAs we reference, will have been mentioned if these rants you've received.

It is rare however, that PSAs are mentioned in this context, which begs the question; why aren't they

afforded the same urgency as other consequences of social media overuse?

Perhaps it's because of how exposing it feels to admit that you have watched a stranger walk their dog, journal, AND go to a Pilates class before you've even got out of bed. Or is it the outdated association between PSRs with extreme violence and obsessions portrayed by mainstream media, common to A-list celebrities.

While celebrity PSRs affect a tiny number of severely disillusioned individuals, social media rooted PSRs subconsciously impact us all, distancing us from our friends, individuality, and eventually, reality. The silver cloud is our autonomy in preventing them.

Our solution?  
Get off that phone.  
Touch some grass.

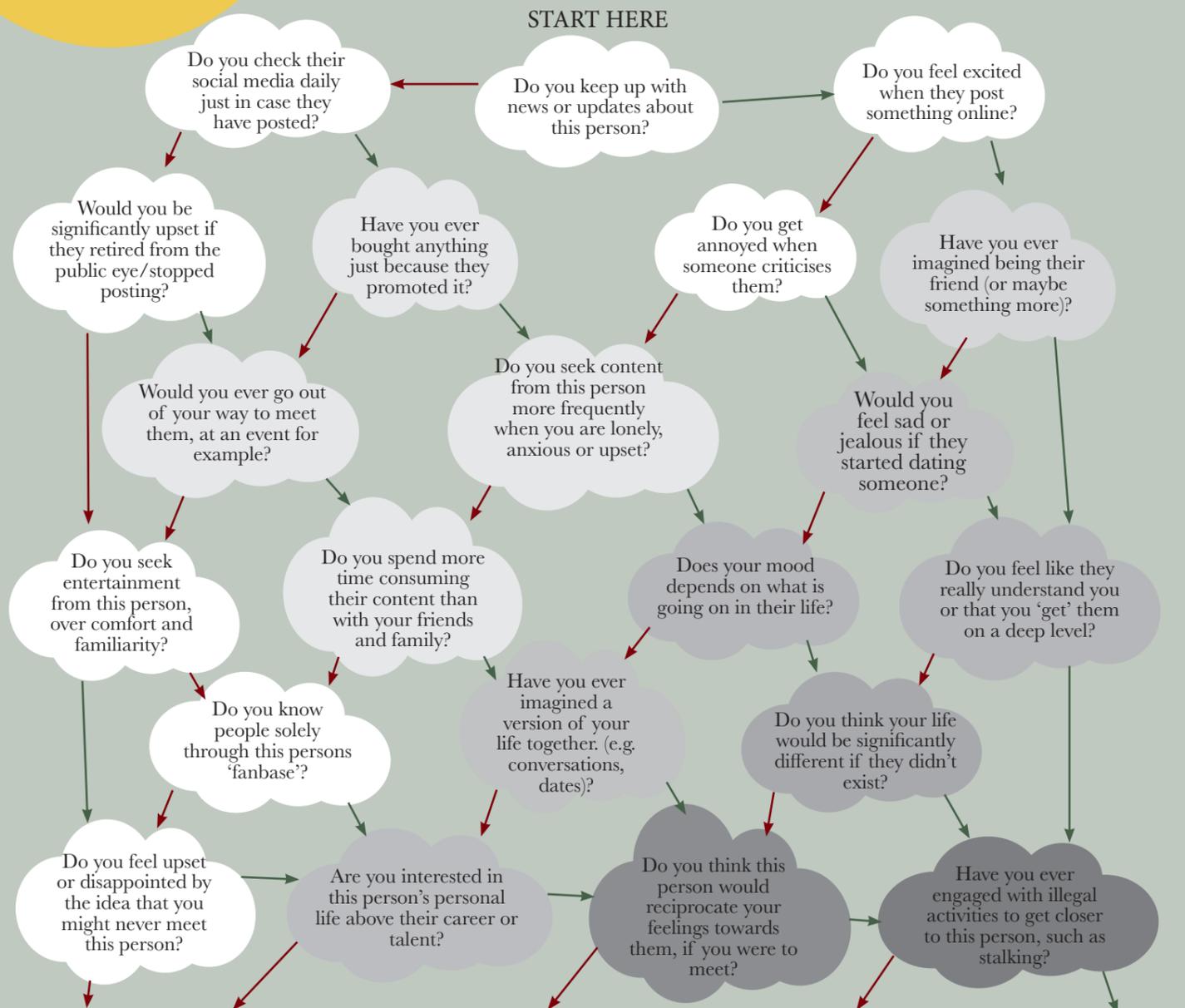


By Evie Mussett

Worried you might be PSR guilty after reading the article on page 3?

Take this quick quiz and find out...

# WHICH LEVEL OF PARASOCIAL ARE YOU?



REGULAR FAN	ENTERTAINMENT SOCIAL	INTENSE PERSONAL	BORDERLINE PATHOLOGICAL
Well done, you have avoided the clutches of parasocial relationships... You may occasionally (or frequently!) discuss this person with other fans, or follow their life updates on social media, but your feelings towards them don't go further than an appreciation for them as entertainment. Nothing wrong with being a fan!	While you may not notice any issues yet, interpersonal illusions caused by social media means that intense fanhood can be the beginning of a slippery slope... Feel free to continue consuming this person's content, but keep in mind that you are a fan... nothing more. Don't lose interest in your other hobbies and interests!	This person is not your soulmate, and doesn't know you exist. Sorry! Yes, you refer to this public figure as your 'comfort' influencer/celeb, but why not solve the root problem - loneliness. Take a break from their content, at least temporarily, and seek support from friends and family. After all, they actually love you back!	You have taken celebrity worship to the extreme... Your obsessive fantasies around this celebrity, large sums of money spent on memorabilia, and stalker-esque tendencies have overrun your life, and any friends and family who still have the time to see you between these ventures, are concerned. Touch some grass!

# KEEPING THE MIND FIT

Sport plays a vital role in improving the overall mental well-being of young people, according to assistant head of sports BU Mike Barry, a man well versed on the benefits of sport on mental health...

Mike explains that "sport is hugely important in improving mental health. I believe that from the bottom of my heart. I love the release that it gives you." There is extensive research on how it can improve the mental health of students and young people, including their academic performance, retention rates, and friendships.

SportBU prides itself on inclusivity and creating opportunities for people to get involved, as well as providing bursaries to those who may not be able to afford the costs, to ensure all can feel the benefits of sport.

Mike had some advice for those unsure about whether they should partake in sporting activities or general exercise.

"I'd recommend students who may feel unmotivated in competing in sport or exercise, just to give it a go. Sometimes I can be daunting, but everyone has been in the same boat of starting something new before. Just getting out on a walk can be beneficial as well. I work in an office, and sometimes if I'm feeling stressed, I like to do a route around the campus just to clear my mind. You will never go from zero to Olympic Champion; it's all about small steps to get started, and soon you'll see the benefits."

According to a report from BUCS in 2025, there was a positive correlation between high mental wellbeing and activity levels. Those who are active had the highest wellbeing score, of 23.96, while those inactive scored the lowest, of 22.71. Josh Johns, Great British Wheelchair Tennis, has also spoken about the effect playing sports and physical exercise can have

on his mental health. Josh has represented England at the 2023 Junior World Championships in Portugal, and climbed as high as 44th in the ITF singles rankings in July 2025.

"It's good to be able to go out on the court and focus on something that doesn't have any other connections to it, other than the performance related ones."

He talked about the pressure to perform as an elite athlete, and the way in which it can sometimes have a negative impact on his mental health.

"My hardest moment was when I reached my first Grand Slam. It didn't go to plan at all, and I just crumbled under the pressure straight away."

Josh commented on how he deals with pressures.

"I now work with a sport psychologist to manage all my pressures. It's a good way to bring you back down to earth. My family are also there for me when I go through a rough patch. My girlfriend competes to a high level in sport as well, so she understands the pressure. Being able to talk to her is a great support."

"Attitudes surrounding mental health in tennis have improved a lot"

JOSH JOHNS



By AJ Animashaun & Joe Robinson

# WHO SAYS ROMANCE IS DEAD?

Gen Z, apparently. An epidemic of red flags, golden retriever boyfriends, princess treatment, and ick lists have transformed dating into a never ending checklist for a cohort who's reputation as the loneliest and most rejected generation, seems to be increasingly justified.

Our generation has long faced accusations of being losers in the romance realm: we are meeting fewer people, having less sex, most of us unable to send a rose on Hinge without cringing. Despite a generational reluctance to make the first move, for 25% of 60-15-year-olds, 'not finding love' is a significant worry.

With social media often dictating our interpersonal relationships instead of vice versa, many young people haven't yet dated without the internet's input and assess potential partners according to viral terms pushed by algorithms, rather than their own experiences.

21-year-old Ella Vyas, a self-proclaimed picky dater, knows this struggle all too well.

She adds item 34 to the lengthy 'ick list' on her notes app:

'Doesn't call his Mum enough'

Directly above, item number 33 reads:

'Calls his Mum too much'

Between being raised on a strict diet of fanfiction and the never-ending parade of couple-content on her feeds, where some strangers beam into their 'Boo-Baskets', and others berate their partners for missing the Halloween-hamper memo, Ella struggles to keep up with the ever-raising dating par.

"I've built up a perfect mental image for as long as I can remember. Yeah, it feels good to keep my standards high, but I do sometimes worry that the man I have in mind doesn't exist."

There is no end to the male-spe-

cific dating terminology on social media.

Singletons like Ella question; Where is everyone finding the non-performative 'yearners', providers with golden retriever energy, or guys who give you princess treatment, because if he wanted to, he would?

It seems that 'gaslighting', 'narcissists' riddled with 'red flags' we're told to avoid, are far more common offline.

Vyas reflects on her latest potential love interest, who she booted before it became official. She explains that her strict criteria learnt from social media may have helped her dodge a bullet.

"Over time he got more comfortable criticizing me" she said. "The last straw was when he said he felt intimidated by me. I'm not intimidating at all. He was just unable to match my standards, and that made him insecure. It was my last straw, and he had to go."

Relational psychoanalyst, Cynthia LaForte, suggests that a generational 'need to diagnose' has re-popularized assessment methods such as the 'red nail theory' or 'orange peel theory' as a way of identifying the bad eggs from the keepers.

Anyone else got a feeling of déjà vu to the teachings of Sex and the City, and Cosmo magazine?

While social media's dating jargon may serve as helpful guidance for less experienced daters, LaForte suggests that efficient, mechanized romance has left little room for humanity:

"There's a big narrative around 'the types of people you date', which leaves little room for compassion. It's damagingly reductive, taking a person and treating them as a checklist." said LaForte to The Guardian.

*"We've pathologised away personality"*

CYNTHIA LAFORTE

Jeff Guenther, a licensed counsellor known as "Therapy Jeff" on TikTok and Instagram, has racked up over 4 million followers across both platforms, where he shares dating and relationship advice, which often focuses on de-centering efficiency.

"There's a lot of 'We have our lists, and we stick to them' which stops us meeting people that might be a great match", he says.

Guenther also blames the use of superficial filters on dating apps, which allow users to be 'overly picky', and unrealistic in their preferences.

"A lot of people are filtering for men that are over 6 feet tall when only 11% of men are over 6 feet tall."

He's not wrong. In fact, women are 15% more likely to use superficial filters and preferences on dating apps, as reported by The Economist.

While Guenther (who relevantly, is a straight man) calls this 'pickiness' superficial, for women, it's an opportunity to reclaim the autonomy in who you date, that until recently, has been exclusive to men.

Can't we afford women to be a little picky, after an ancient history of being arm candy? It all sounds progressive to me - the term 'written by a woman' a compliment of the highest degree, and the female gaze back in fashion.

Seasoned survivor of the intersection between woman, feminist, and chronically online, Ella, however, is skeptical.

"It's become really embarrassing, to be seen with someone who doesn't absolutely worship you." she says.

"If nobody is willing to worship me in the same way that other women are worshiped by their boyfriends online, there must be a reason why. It's a disparity that only other women will recognise."

While she doesn't account for the UK's 10.4% of 16-24-year-olds who identify as LGBTQ+, Ella's point begs the question: Are men in heteronormative relationships judged by women depending on how well they treat their girlfriends, or are women judged by other women, according to how well their boyfriends are willing to treat them?

Is the endless discourse around the perfect partner really in the interest of finding a prince charming or is it a cog in the female comparison machine.

A 2025 study by The Cut magazine surveyed the dating habits of 100 men and found that they too are culprits of Build-A-Bear-ing their ideal partner.

Women had been cut off for the men's own 'icks'; using a baby voice with her dog, deleting her

boyfriend's ex from his Netflix profile, wearing colourful or experimental makeup on her birthday, and going on girls' holidays, to name a few.

Whether it's a high-value woman, black cat girlfriend, or a 'pick me girl' to be avoided, the male parallel of women's love-legalese is just as prevalent online.

Our initial conversation sparked a realisation in Ella, that her never ending lists of what to avoid, observational research, and use of amateur love-doctor theories were all in vain.

A month and a half since our last conversation, and Ella has deleted TikTok, avoids couple content online, and has spent some time self-reflecting on how a romantic partner could enhance her life.

It turns out our parents were

right. It really is that phone.

"I quickly found that I didn't even want a boyfriend" she said her face buoyant with the smile of a situation-ship-free woman.

"Having more space on my notes app has been vastly more fulfilling than the impossible task of finding my Matt Damon-Pedro Pascal hybrid prince charming"

For the rest of us Gen Zs, perhaps it's easier to leave the 'as he should' attitude behind, and 'princess treatment' to fairytales...

If the right person does eventually sweep you off your feet, you might just find that with the small 'dumpable offences' which once made you think that romance was dead, comes the deeply personal intricacy and charm you were missing.



By Evie Mussett

# SCROLL FREE SEASONS

# THE ART OF THINKING

## PAINTING CARDS

Grab yourself a deck of cards, and get painting.

There are 52 cards so good thing you have the whole year to complete this!

1

## VALENTINES CARDS

Lonely hearts club? Loved up? Here is a quick craft to love this February?

A simple valentine to show just how much you care.

2

## PAINT GLASSES

Admire your vino. This activity can be a group night in, sipping and painting.

Try not to spill the paint.

3

## BOUQUET CARD

Take yourself for a walk. Look around, take your eyes of the screen.

Pick a handful of pretty flowers and poke through a page.

4

## POTTERY PAINTING

We know you have seen the trends. Pottery painting is popular for a reason.

The perfect, rewarding craft this May.

5

## SHELL FRAME

The perfect way to encapsulate a beach memory this summer.

All you need is shells, hot glue and a frame.

6

## WINE CANDLES

Grab those empty bottles from the recycling bin and stick a long stem candle in.

That didn't take long did it!

7

## JEWELLERY MAKING

Go to your local hobbycraft, B&M or The Works...don't be lazy.

This summer people will be asking YOU where you got your jewellery from.

8

## LEAF STAMPING

We know what you are thinking. This is not a primary school.

Grab a leaf, coat in a lick of paint and get stamping!

9

## MASQUEREDE MASK

No halloween costume? No problem! No need to order from Amazon this year.

Create your own masquerade mask.

10

## AUTUMN WREATH

Those leaves outside can be used again! Oh joy! Poke a hole in each leaf and start stringing.

You're gonna need a lot of leaves for this one.

11

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

Niche we know but this the perfect way to personalise a message to those you love.

A gift and card in one.

12

*Do you remember when you were younger and the world was more colourful? How paper turned into aeroplanes, and pencils created stories?*

Well, we know what happened. You dropped your crafting supplies and started picking up wires, phones, and laptops. But did you ever really stop for a moment and think, what if you started crafting again?

From the best ability to no skill at all, crafting is for everybody. Crafts are the perfect way to relax, unwind, and get in touch with your inner child again. So we have come up with twelve easy crafts that you can scroll through in twelve months. We know what you're like with procrastination, so we have given you a whole year.

Research published by University College London's MARCH mental health network proves that

*"The arts are linked with dopamine release, which encourages cognitive flexibility, and they reduce our risk of dementia."*

Getting in touch with your fine motor skills in your brain not only creates beautiful art, but it

also literally reduces your ageing. No more splashing cash on those beauty products, which we all know don't really work.

It's time to be honest with yourself and admit that you use your phone too much.

What is the first thing you do in the morning?

It's most likely that you turn your alarm off from your phone. Then you might be tempted to check your messages, hundreds of notifications swarming your phone. There was a reason that Arts and Crafts were such a centralised focus in primary school.

Ofsted explain how Arts and Crafts are vitally important to the development of the growth of the mind.

Arts and Crafts develops your fine motor skills, boost creativity and problem-solving abilities. So why did you stop doing it!

We're holding you accountable for time-wasting and doom scrolling.

It's time to bring this mindset into your adulthood. Take those precious hours that you have after work or school to set up a crafty environment.

Think back to when you would draw the sun in the corner of the page and birds like flying W's. Take a pen to the page and just

start doodling. See where your mind takes you. You won't be creating the Mona Lisa anytime soon, so start small and don't put pressure on yourself to make it perfect.

Take a look at our Scroll Free Seasons for monthly inspiration. Make your loved ones a Christmas card, that doesn't require much, just a piece of paper and a heartfelt message.

Your inner child is still in there somewhere, that's why you still laugh when you hear a fart, or cry at sad, dog videos on TikTok. So why don't you start getting your hands in the dirt, the glue and the tape and re-connect with something that younger you would have loved.

We know you see everyone posting their Strava successes or proposals on Instagram, why surround yourself with things that make you un-happy. By turning off your phone and picking up a paint brush you are detoxing from the false realities advertised on social media. You can be the creator for your future, and hey it is a great opener on a date.

'What are your hobbies'... 'I craft.'

See...doesn't that make you sound more interesting. We are excited to see what you get up to!



# NO-SCROLL SUNDAY

*You're all addicted to your mobile phones and who can blame you - we all love a bit of trash TV and sending memes to your mates. The world is online now, but there are better and more fun ways to be entertained than your screens. Touch Grass presents No-Scroll Sunday, the new digital detox.*

This radical initiative is designed to reinvent yourself back into a human being that does human activities. To smell fresh air, move your body, and touch a book occasionally.

It removes you from the screen suctioning of your mobile phones. A recent survey conducted by Statista in 2023 found that between the ages 16-24 years, 93 minutes were spent on video-sharing platforms per day.

Whilst that sounds like an average statistic, it's a wake-up call to how much productivity you could get done instead.

But let's not judge! It happens, so instead you can all take up some new, fun activities.

## How Do You Join In?

You may have more time for work and homework, you may remember to actually have a conversation, less anxiety (you're not constantly comparing yourselves to others, leading to a happier day).

Here are some detox examples: read a book: you may find a new hobby and it was found that there is a 20% reduction in mortality for those who read books as found in 2024 article in Healthline.

Meet up with friend, old or new! Sometimes it's more convenient to message them online, yet it's so important to have in-person conversations.

Get your sweat on!

It's so important to move your bodies and let those endorphins

form!

Bake a cake or unleash your inner chefs! You never know... you could be the next Gordon Ramsay.

Here is how the team are currently detoxing: Sophia is surfing, AJ is enjoying the gym, Joe loves running, Lydia has gotten into cooking and Evie is loving spending time with friends.

## What Are the Perks?

It may be a bit overwhelming right now, but rest assured there is logic to this madness...

It was found in a 2019 journal article from Trine Syvertsen in Digital Detox that problematic usage should impair normal functioning and cause distress.

Scary information, isn't it?! It doesn't have to be your story if you looked up from your phones every once in a while, and took up activities instead.

I know, I know but FOMO exists for you Gen-Z's, which describes the fear of missing out, yet FOMO can happen in the real-world too if you're stuck inside mindlessly meandering online.

At first, your hands may feel restless. Reaching for your phones has become a reflex. When you're not supposed to be doing something, you want to do it more. But this initiative is way more exciting and beneficial.

Here's the secret: at the other end of that detox tunnel, there is something transformative.

We experience real sense again, we notice light, the weather, how funny your friends really are and who YOU are without the constant noise of our screens.

A recent study by the Frontiers in 2025, found that a digital detox offers improved attention, stress reduction, and enhanced self-reflection.

There is a reason why hot girl walks and meditation are trending currently. For Touch Grass

however, it is not just a trend, it's lifestyle that all Gen-Zs should get on board with!

No-Scroll Sunday allows your minds to quiet the noise and to discover yourselves away from the screens by trying something new, like getting out of our comfort zones!

Think of it as a technology fast that allows for a much-needed reset. This is chance to discover what real fullness feels like, outdoors or indoors, you choose.

## Our Mission

Once you take the leap from your digital days, and put your phones down, you start looking up, both mentally and physically.

It becomes a way to focus on the positive aspect, as studied by Mary Ann Liebert in the journal of social media and Youth Mental Health.

You come alive; you have in-depth conversations that leave you feeling refreshed, instead of deflated.

As the up-and-comers, you can see a new trend and break away from the norms! For example, book that off-grid trips with the girls or the guys that we've always dreamt of doing.

In a 2022 article by The Guardian, celebrities, such as Tom Holland announced he was taking a break from Instagram and Twitter because he found them "overstimulating and overwhelming". You all could hop on the celebrity trend, where you may surprise yourselves with how much fun it is to detox.

Now, it's hard to do this all day every day, even the Touch Grass team couldn't do that.

Whether it be a full day on a Sunday or a random Tuesday afternoon, unplug, open your blinds, and touch some grass.

*The new trend you are going to be obsessed with...*



By Lydia Thomas

# STANDARDS & ESCAPISM

*There's a type of friendship one only finds in Nigerian boarding schools, where snacks and whispers are shared long after lights out, binding permanent friendships and memories. This is how I met Dami Sololá almost a decade ago ...*

Sitting next to Dami on a campus bench at Warwick University, listening to her speak with a clarity that feels so rare these days, I'm not just interviewing someone for a magazine; I am speaking to a person I have grown through life with.

Dami is currently studying at Warwick Business School, studying International Management, and has also dabbled in media and marketing, but that's not why I wanted to talk to her.

I wanted to talk with her, because she went through something most of us are still fighting in silence: the fight between living one's life and watching one's life online.

We are living in a world where we are getting out of reality is in the palm of our hands. A scroll here, a swipe there, and in the blink of an eye we're elsewhere.

The internet has silently become that place to which we run whenever real life gets too much to handle. For some, this is procrastination, for others a form of self care.

The problem is when that escape becomes home: when the online world starts to feel more comforting than the real one, when it becomes the place, you live instead of visit.

Dami is frank about how she has used Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and TikTok in the past as one of her coping mechanisms for those inevitable "growing pains" and other stressors.

Eventually, though, she made a big leap away from being online consistently. She was able to gain a fresh perspective from that digital detox in that she actually

*"enjoyed who I've been without it."*

The core of the interview centers around Dami's observations, having personally experienced both the serenity of being unplugged and the addictive appeal of online life.

## Escapism

As mentioned, the discussion highlights that social media has completely flipped the concept of avoiding reality. According to Dami, platforms offer an isolated and on-demand escape.

Users can have this escape at any moment in time, from any place, and for free. They scroll endlessly without real two-way communication.

Algorithms are also used in an attempt to make the content an already personalized cycle almost unbreakable. The reason why it may be extremely hard for users to stop voluntarily is because continuous, customized access to social media entraps them into a never-ending loop of "doom scrolling."

Escapism is used thoughtfully to improve the mental state of people and is in no way exclusively bad; it is considered to be a reset button for mental health. The discussion of the following mental solutions is continued:

## Stress Reduction

Very much plausible; the reduction of stress could be brought about by engaging in a favorite game or being whisked into a fantasy world. Indeed, it has been shown to reduce anxiety, lower cortisol levels, and provide respite from social and academic pressures. An active avenue of relaxation is therefore derived from such a practice.

The emotional release will be a significantly therapeutic key that comes by exploring stories,

music, and art. This enables one safely and in a vicarious manner to process a variety of emotions.

## Cognitive Recharge

Brief moments of escapism through the use of social media platforms can allow the mind time to roam, sometimes enhancing one's ability to concentrate and solve problems once work is resumed. The human brain was never intended to stay highly focused for extended periods.

## Community Building

Fan sites, online gaming communities, and other kinds of interest groups develop a sense of community and attachment, which is an important aspect of mental health; students often feel disconnected, particularly.

This is achieved with the help of social media and online platforms through creating communities and interest groups that they could join to ease their stress.

## Discovery & Perspective

Engaging in others or alternative realities lets individuals discover much about themselves and their problems, thus creating deeper empathy and self-awareness when trying to gain perspective or self-discovery.

The overall emphasis of the interview is on the pervasive effects that online norms have set in regarding culture, appearance, and a way of life.

According to Dami, the main effect is damaging, and it has a great deal to do with mental health.

Even though "day-in-the-life" content is gaining more traction, she says, people only post the "highlights" or carefully curated parts of their lives.

A person observing such apparently perfect lives places extreme strain upon themselves and

fosters a self-destructive tendency to compare with others, which causes them to concentrate more on their failings than on their blessings.

Dami believes that through this constant comparison, authenticity is being eroded.

There is this human tendency among people who are not happy with their lives to look at the achievements and the happy faces on the internet and feel, that you would be happier if you were in their shoes.

This encourages trends of overconsumption and that material things in life make life worth living.

More importantly, intellectual integrity is affected since people are likely to believe anything they see on social media without question, which spreads false information.

Dami believes the onus lies with the individual to find solutions. She suggests moderation, perhaps with the aid of a restriction from platforms, and a focus on content that makes users "happy rather than heavy" as a healthier alternative.

She cuts to the chase in advising anyone trying to break free: "what you see online is not real."

To reap the rewards, she suggests people disconnect for a certain period, even a week or two. She took effective practical steps such as going "cold turkey" and completely removing social media applications from her phone,

her primary device, and only accessing the applications on a secondary device such as a laptop.

The reason she stayed off social media was less the pain of withdrawal but, rather, the serenity and confidence she felt in focusing on her own journey without having to compare her successes with what she witnessed online.

## Dami's Advice

Dami emphasized that breaking out of the social media cycle often requires a conscious, sometimes radical, change in behavior. She advises "going cold turkey." She proposes two main doable tactics that have helped her keep her presence online low: Device segregation:

Take all social media apps off your primary device, whether your phone, and put them only on a backup device you don't use often or carry on your person, such as a laptop or tablet.

The beauty of it is that it makes access very difficult.

A key downside of excessive phone, internet and social media use is how easy to access they are now. The impulsive nature of device addiction is best prevented

ed by making the conscious decision to switch to a less convenient device. Active distraction means a switch to other kinds of entertainment or hobby activities without passive screen use.

While activities like watching Netflix or YouTube also constitute escapism, Dami points out they are fundamentally different from the endless, self-comparison cycle of social media.

Generally speaking, these other activities don't exert pressure to change your life or assess your worth against a skillfully curated feed.

Take an intentional break. This should be absolute, for some period of time, she says, even only one to three weeks, in order for the mind to reset and experience life to the fullest.

*"Personal awareness has to be there; after all, major media platforms thrive on this destructive doom scrolling cycle."*

DAMI SOLOLA

By AJ Animashaun



# COLD WATER, CLEAN MIND

*Picture this: As the sun rises you feel the brisk air tracing your skin, and the world is completely quiet as you look out at the ocean. You've decided to take the detox plunge—both physically and metaphorically. Here enter: cold water therapy, the rejuvenating detox you didn't know you needed.*

Now, this isn't a new invention, it's been going for centuries, from Icelandic plunges to the ancient Greek using it for high fevers, as discussed in a website article by Plunge in 2021. Hey, it's proved by science after all!

Here at Touch Grass, discussions of disconnecting and reconnecting with to you inner selves are discussed; who you are without all the technological noise.

Cold water therapy ties into this perfectly. It's an off button you can access anytime, no phone required. good for the mind and the body; it's a win-win, right?

Now, you're all probably thinking: what's in it for me? In all honesty, what isn't in it for you!

The moment that you step into

that gloriously icy water, a switch happens. At first, yes, let's be real, you're cold. However, what is happening behind the scenes is wonderful.

Even better than that meme your friend just sent you!

It was in a recent BBC Radio 4 show "Just One Thing", Michael Mosely discovered that there is growing evidence that winter swimmers are more resistant to certain illnesses and infections.

This is an incredible insight to prove that taking the detox plunge can steer you away from those nasty Winter bugs we all know and hate.

It becomes a boost that isn't needed from a charging cable. There is evidence from Bupa in 2025, that cold water therapy can also improve general wellbeing, and possibly help with depression.

In this day and age, that is so important as technology is increasingly grabbing more of your attention, dragging you further into a comparative rabbit hole, causing all sort of insecurities. However, if you looked after your well-being more, you could reduce this by vast amounts!

One of the most popular methods for cold water therapy is conducted by athlete, Wim Hof.

He encourages society to come away from the phones and take up three pillars from the methodology of cold-water therapy. On Wim Hof's current website named The Wim Hof Method, these include: breathing, cold exposure and commitment & mindset.

These steps allow for more energy, reduced stress levels, and an augmented immune response, according to his website.

He's not the only one to

conducted research on the benefits, Dr. Susanna Soberg, a scientist and author who specialises in metabolism and heat exposure, as found in her

Now, take some time to reflect and thinking about the last time you were completely present. No doom-scrolling, no TV streaming, but alive.

This is what cold water therapy can help with, when you turn the notifications off and fully let your brain and body emerge. Cold water therapy is everything social media isn't.

You all love a trend and new activity, so instead of endlessly following online trends, come join the real world! It's real, not technologically curated.

So, the next time you find yourself in a TikTok bed rot, get up and reach for that cold tap. Start there and slowly ease into the idea of outdoor swimming.

You're not pixelated, you have a pulse, let's not forget that. Lets quickly recap the main steps.

1. Try a cold shower for 2 to 3 minutes. Breathing deeply will help decrease your discomfort in your mind. As discovered in Healthline's 2025 article on cold water shower benefits.

2. Whether it be your nearest lake, sea, swimming pool or even if you're feeling fancy, an ice bath, get into some cold water!

3. Ditch the phone...reset!

We get it. A beachfront in sub-minus weather and freezing cold water may not sound like your typical idea of fun. But for owner of The Saltwater Sauna, Sam Glyn-Jones, it's an unmatched high.

"I got hooked on this idea of having a sauna," Sam beams, as he stands in the sand dunes, whilst we take cover from the sea breeze.



He describes how The Saltwater Sauna "just blew up" from him and his Finnish wife, Arlene, being inspired to help others.

After years of working for a programme called Resurface that helps those struggling with mental health, he introduced this "local's project" for people to have a sea swim, and then eventually he "hired a sauna from Wales and never looked back."

For Sam himself, the sea and the sauna are more than just looking after yourself, it's a culture. He explained that it's about having a healthy body and healthy mind.

"Contentment and peace come from different places"

## The Science

Cold water therapy has become increasingly popular over the years, from athletes to social media influencers hopping onto the trend. But is there more to it than just a trend? Sam debunked all the myths for all you Gen-Zs.

Not only does it have "physical and mental benefits" such as being the "equivalent to doing a light 45-minute jog", for his Finnish wife, Arlene, "Fins saw sauna like the pub." Sam says this as a "social connectiveness in nature", as he smiles to himself, barely being able to contain his excitement for his passion. The lifestyle has replaced the "third space" as Sam

explains, so instead of having pubs, churches and business establishments that society flock to, he believes his business becomes a new sanctuary.

he thinks it's especially important for young people, who "haven't had experiences like that before, and are affected by the problems of the digital age. The youth think too much." Cold water therapy provides that escapism. You don't need to do this alone, either. The Saltwater Sauna is the new hub for community. Sam encourages everyone to join. There are no age limits and the benefits are instant.

He witnesses the public "bringing friends and families from people that never do anything like this." There are no phones, just you or your friends!

Now, doesn't that sound more fun than doomscrolling?

## Tried and Tested

I, and one of the team members here at Touch Grass, are proof of the pudding. We took the plunge, put our phones away, submerged into the sea and got our sweat on in the sauna.

It was incredible and so liberating. We followed Sam's own routine that follows the "Nordic Cycle" whereby you try thirty seconds to three minutes in the cold first, and then eight to fifteen minutes in the heat. You "rinse

and repeat three or four times to obtain that good mood after", Sam enthusiastically explains, as we excitedly await our turn in the sea after his first dip.

When I asked Sam if there's any advice for people to continue this practice, he laughed and said, "we don't need to do anything, it's addictive." Trust me...I can see why.

It's hard to know what wellness trends to upkeep or not however, for Sam this one is "life changing."

And as a recipient of this experience itself, I can honestly say I can agree with Sam's ethos.

You will feel "buzzy and excited" afterward, even if you just do it for the "catch up with friends and have a laugh" over the mental and physical benefits.

It's affordable as well with your friends! For sixty-five minutes in a communal sauna, it's £15.

That's a win-win in my eyes; you're with a community and budget friendly, suited for all age-groups.

Before heading off for his final dip, Sam looked off to the sunset setting over Sandbanks beach.

"You suddenly feel liberated, which is the whole point, isn't it?"

So, let's disconnect from our phones and take the plunge.

By Lydia Thomas