

Some couples may also want to make ironclad rules about privacy to avoid disagreements over what information or images are appropriate to post online. Again, it's important to establish policies that feel fair to you both—and then to respect them.

To get a sense of whether the issue of high-tech distractions is a significant one in your relationship and requires some extra attention, answer the following.

QUIZ: ELECTRONIC DISTRACTIONS

- | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. I worry that my partner spends
too much time attending to e-mail
or other online tasks. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 2. Often when I want to talk to my
partner, he or she is busy texting
or on the web. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 3. Because of digital distractions,
I find it hard to feel like I come first
to my partner. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 4. I feel that my partner wants
to zone out far too much with TV
or digital media. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 5. It hurts me when I come into a room
and my partner hardly notices me because
he or she is immersed in social media. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 6. I feel that because of electronic
media my partner isn't really fully
available to me. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 7. Digital media seem to burn up
whatever time there is for the two
of us. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |
| 8. My partner is too distracted by all
of the electronic options and social
media to be able to be fully present
with me. | Rarely
(0) | At Times
(1) | Usually
(2) | Often
(3) |

9. Attention to social media or other such distractions is a real issue between us.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)
10. Sometimes I would like to come first in my partner's attention rather than tech.	Rarely (0)	At Times (1)	Usually (2)	Often (3)

Scoring. Add up the points (indicated in each column).

0 to 10. Being too “plugged in” is not a serious issue for the two of you.

11 to 20. Your score suggests that your relationship might benefit from some extra problem solving in this area. Apply the negotiating advice in the preceding chapter (on solvable problems) to the activities that are causing the most conflict (such as setting limits for when and where to text, answer cell phones, respond to e-mails, play video games, etc.). Being up front and loving as you discuss your needs can keep these issues from overwhelming your relationship.

21 to 30. Your score suggests that excessive attention to social media and related distractions may be interfering with your relationship. See if you can agree on a specific daily time limit for engaging in these activities. Stick to this schedule for a week, say, and then reevaluate your feelings about the issue. Sometimes couples use diversions as a way to avoid communication and connection. If you need extra help in this area, begin by reading or rereading chapter 6, “Turn Toward Each Other Instead of Away.” Be sure to work through the exercises in that chapter. If differences in this area remain unsolvable, follow the advice in chapter 11, “Overcome Gridlock.”

THE PROBLEM WITH PORN

No discussion of high-tech distractions would be complete without mentioning the immense popularity of pornography. There are an estimated 500 million pages of sexually explicit porn on the Internet, and they cater to every conceivable turn-on. A report by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy estimates that between 20 and 33 percent of Internet users in the