



Use "The Four Cs" to Boost Your Happiness and Clear Mental Clutter



Virginia K. Smith

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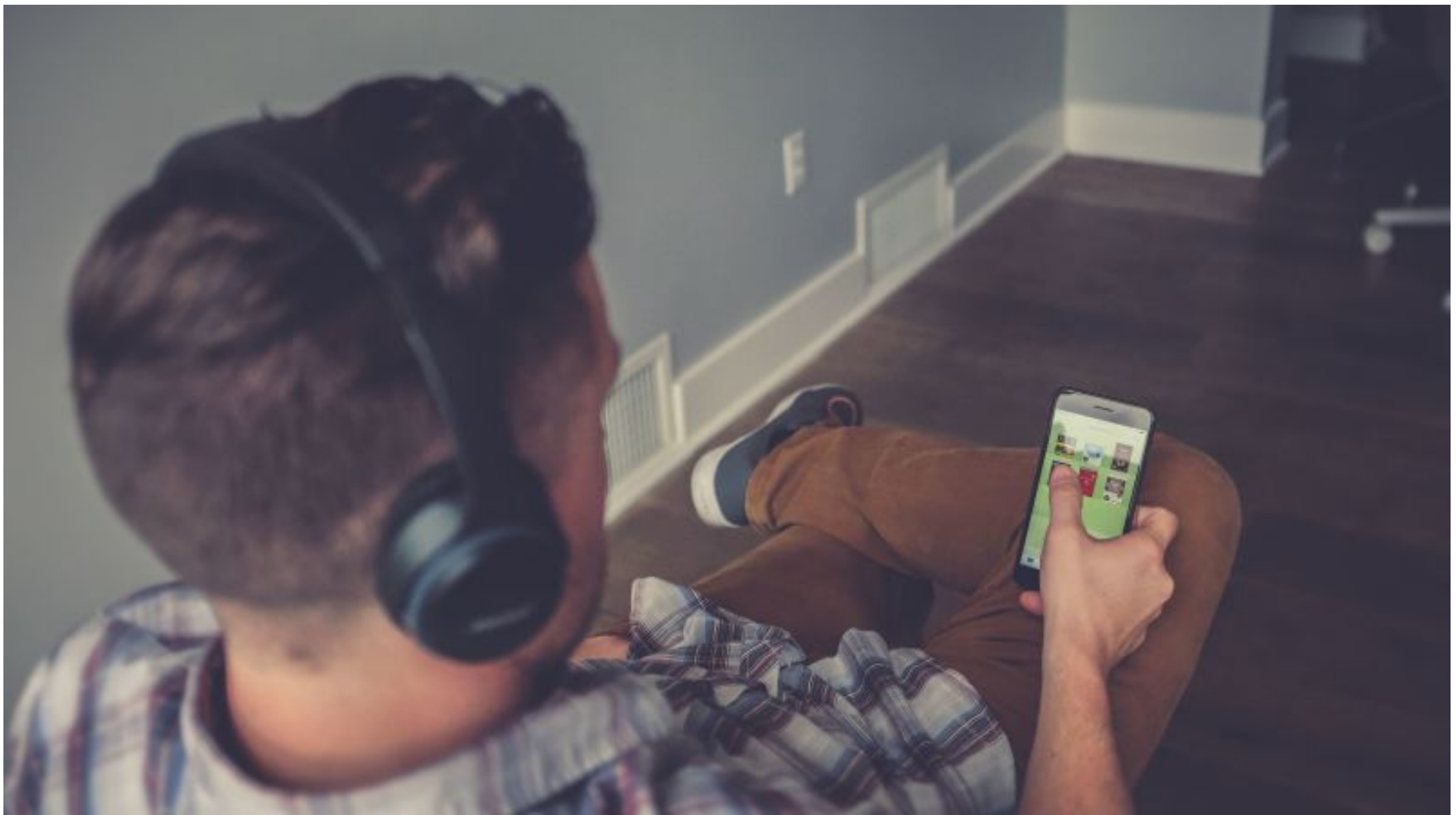


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If you've ever found yourself compulsively refreshing Twitter for the latest god-awful news development—or caught in a vicious cycle with your non-negotiable afternoon candy fix—we're sorry to be the bearers of bad news, but your mind has been hacked.

On a recent episode of Lifehacker's podcast, the Upgrade, we talked to Dr. Robert Lustig about his new book, *The Hacking of the American Mind: The Science Behind the Corporate Takeover of Our Bodies and Brains*.

Long story short, everyone from corporate food chains to advertisers to app developers has found sneaky ways to trigger something similar to an addiction response in us; refresh Instagram for the millionth time or knock back another bowl of sugar-laden Raisin Bran, and you'll likely experience a small dopamine rush, but be left feeling worse than when you started off.

Bleak, yes, but there are ways to buffer yourself against a constant onslaught of capitalist intrusions, says Lustig, and most of them are blissfully simple. All you need to remember are “the four Cs,” which are as follows:

Connect: This one’s simple, but easy to ignore when you’re constantly communicating via text, Facebook, or DMs. According to Lustig, face-to-face connection with friends or loved ones drives neurons that increase empathy, which in turns boosts your serotonin. (For all of these items, the goal is to boost your serotonin rather than dopamine, as the former works wonders for your long-term happiness, while the latter only provides a temporary rush of pleasures). Carve out some time every day to interact with someone you care about, IRL, phones down.

Contribute: As Lustig puts it, this one is about “Contribution to the betterment of your family, your friends, the world at large [...] doing something that makes the world a better place.” (Note: this is different than doing something that will garner you a pat on the back, the adult equivalent of earning your Boy Scout badges.) This can be anything from volunteering to donating money to charity (spending helping others boosts happiness, while spending on ourselves does not), or, depending on what you do for a living (public school teacher? social worker?), even your job can, er, contribute to your contribution levels.

Cope: “Coping” is a pretty big-tent term, but for the purposes of the Four Cs, it means three things: getting adequate sleep (and ideally, keeping screens out of your room); increasing your mindfulness and cutting down on multi-tasking, which none of us are good at anyway; and exercise, which is another way of giving a big boost to that all-important serotonin.

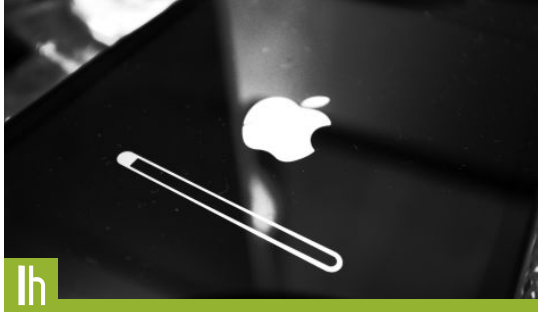
Cook: It’s a public health mantra by now that cooking for yourself is *much* better than eating out all the time, and for good reason: besides being a soothing way to unwind at the end of the day, making your own meals means that you know what’s going into them, and can avoid hidden add-ins (namely fructose) that not only make you gain weight, but also deplete your happiness.

For more wit and wisdom on keeping corporations from hijacking your brain and sapping your well-being, listen to the full interview with Dr. Lustig [here](#).

RECOMMENDED STORIES



How to Prevent Your Mind From Being Hacked, With Robert Lustig



Ten Tricks for Checking Your Phone Less



Binge Eaters Benefit From Therapy, Not Diets

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What Would You Tell Your Younger Self About Coming Out?



Beth Skwarecki
Yesterday 5:30pm • Filed to: NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY ▾

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It’s National Coming Out Day, when people who are comfortably “out” (as gay, or trans, or whatever they had to come out about) share the story of how they began telling people who they really are. But at the same time, others may not feel ready or safe enough to come out.

If you’ve ever had to make a decision about coming out—and deal with the aftermath—what would you tell your younger self? Was it easier or harder than you expected? What surprised you?

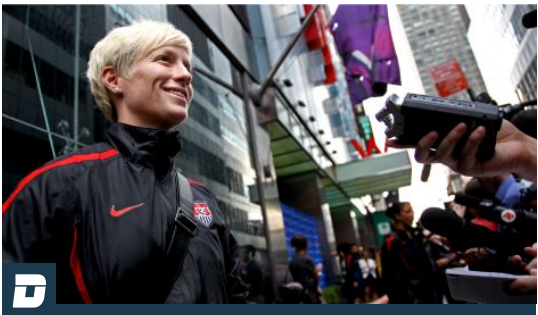
RECOMMENDED STORIES



Six Things I Wish I Knew Before Coming Out



Should I Come Out at Work?



"I'm Gay," Says Megan Rapinoe. "That's Nice," Says Everyone.