HOW TO QUIT

CENTRE

FOR

CYBER

WELLNESS

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2020

HOW TO
QUIT

2019

CENTRE FOR CYBER WELLNESS
HOW TO QUIT

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2ND EDITION, D.I.Y. PRINT
DOWNLOAD PRINT FILES FROM
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T A B L E S   O F   C O N T E N T S

P R O L O G U E
what is this book for ?

Internet startups and communication platforms have lost the last of their positivistic lustre and democratic entitlement.

Today, it is clear that the internet and the new economy that it facilitates has become a force of standardization overtaking community building and empowerment. It no longer simply embodies the ideal of an open and democratizing project, but has also become an invasive and controlling presence flowing through everything we do. We communicate through it, find our news, recipes, jobs and lovers through it. Still, only the fewest people know how to influence and change the way they experience and absorb reality through the internet.

The internet has brought many good things, while at the same time inflicting harm on local communities and communications. Mainstream internet exposes the underprivileged and privileges those that assimilate the mindsets and values of the white Californian male.

Mainstream internet is the wet dream of gig economics, gentrifying the mental landscapes of a new working / creative class, undermining social infrastructure and welfare institutions. At the forefront of this stands the hyperprofessionalized artist as a prototype for the precarious worker of the future.

In light of this disheartening trend, it is worth remembering that computers were, in fact, built by people. They were built to be extensively reconfigured and reprogrammed. Their function and behaviour moulded by human hands. Programming languages were built to be a bridge between humans and machines, understandable by both. The internet was built using open standards and shared code, on shared ideas and practical solutions. It was built on community.

It is important to remember that, although these principles are certainly under threat, we still have the ability to shape and direct these machines, and the way we interface with them and each other. Their core functions can be re-written. The internet can still be radically redesigned.

This book is a product of the conversations and encounters in the group that came to be The Centre for Cyber Wellness.

Our starting point was our own ambivalences: The internet is amazing. It offers instant exposure and unlimited information. Surfing is easy, fun, frictionless. And yet we sometimes find it hard to inhabit its vast and supposedly infinite possibility space.

The internet makes us behave strangely and can make it difficult to recognize the people we love in our friends. This uncanny sense of not belonging grows with time. We feel alienated, inadequate and exploited. And these feelings feel like individual flaws.

To avoid seeking auto-biographical answers to what is at least also structural problems, we started coming together, in the late winter of 2017, talking, sharing experiences, ranting, plotting, experimenting, and asking questions:

- How are our individual experiences of desolation and our concerns on the societal level about mass-surveillances and manipulation, hierarchical and disempowering social infrastructures connected?

- How do we address the problems of the online part of our lives without abandoning this part of our lives altogether, moving into the wilderness?

- How do we change the tratectory of the

internet   without   cancelling   it   all   together?

- How do we turn our apathy, our FOMO and SoMe Stockholm Syndrome into concrete tools for resistance?

- Can we facilitate our own spaces for care and utopian thinking within this changing landscape?

We have experimented for a year, trying to expand the conversation on how to escape the clammy grip of our digital overlords. And now we are making this book. On one hand to find out what we were doing in the first place and what we are to do next, on the other hand, to share the experiments we conducted and the tools we have developed along the way.
        This book presents two performative experiments, both of which were conducted as reactions to the status quo, in an attempt to develop concrete tools to alter, subvert and quit mainstream internet infrastructure and its harmful and depressing routines. Our intent is to balance the potentials of the internet with humans needs for intimacy and local community by focusing on pragmatic tools to actively shape one's internet usage and aid in digital care towards oneself and others.
        The two experiments was a part of the exibition "Shaking the habitual" at I meter I exhibition space in Copenhagen. Here, over a period from March 3rd through June 23rd, 2018, I meter I invited artists, writers and activist groups to join a search for feminist utopian horizons. Our contribution was the two workshops "Digital Stress and Mindful Computing" and "On behalf of".
        This book aims to document and share the results of these two workshops. The provisional manuals reproduced here are intended as an incomplete toolbox, and not as a finished blueprint. We invite people re-use, remix and share. Feel free to copy, modify and appropriate the tools, adapting them to the particular needs of your community. How to Quit? is released under a free culture license. How to Quit? is not a step-by-step guide telling you how you quit, but the beginning of a conversation.

Can we summon something different and make it real?

WE   RARELY   TALK   ABOUT   UTOPIA

We rarely talk about utopia anymore. Most future scenarios today are determined by a sense of disaster and the dystopic outcome of environmental catastrophe, overpopulation as well as economic and social exploitation. Utopia seems perhaps too unrealistic. Still attached to the phenomenon lingers a reminder of how ideas of better societies in many instances turned into totalitarian regimes.

However throughout history the utopia has been an important tool in reimagine future scenarios. It has created a free space where we can play with different social structures that challenges existing norms and presumptions. For this reason utopias have also been important in creating a space from where voices of the less powerful have been able to safely reimagine their position in society.

Utopian then becomes a refuge or shelter wherein we may safely envision a changed society. And although mere metaphor located in no real place, utopia nonetheless has power – utopian ideals and ideas change minds: changed minds then change worlds.

DIGITAL STRESS AND MINDFUL COMPUTING

How stressed out is your online data profile and what are the consequences for your cyber security, your privacy and your digital health? Do you control the computers or do they control you?

We introduce you to the mysteries of a healthy online life and how to let go of your digital dependencies. Through a stress test and a series of mindful computing excercises we will help you and the computers in your life back on the path towards cyber wellness.

From the invitation to the first How To Quit workshop, May 2018

Cast of characters

The Greeter:
Welcomes the participants as they arrive and makes them feel at ease.

The Wrapper:
Envelopes and seals the phones of the participants.

The Hierophant:
Conducts the ceremony.

The Psychopomp:
Escorts the participants from the ceremonial space to the inner sanctum.

G r e e t i n g s   a n d   w r a p p i n g s

As participants arrive, they are greeted and offered tea by the Greeter. The ceremony will take about two hours, with no breaks, so it will be a good idea to use the restroom beforehand. The Greeter informs the partipants that the ceremonial space is a device free zone and asks them to turn off their phones and hand it to the Wrapper. The Wrapper takes the participants phone, carefully wrap it, wax seal it and stamp the seal, and give the participant the sigilized token. All the phones are places in a chest that is then locked and placed on a piedestal in the ceremonial space.

W e l c o m e

As the participants enter the ceremonial space, they are met by the Hierophant who welcomes each participant individually in the following manner:

Welcome   .
What   is   your   name?
Thank   you   for   coming.
I'm   so   happy   that   you   have   decided   to   join.
How   has   your   day   been?
How   are   you   feeling?

Once all participants have arrived and entered the ceremonial space, the Greeter, Wrapper, and Psychopomp enter the space and position themselves at the three walls. In front of the window, the Hierophant calls attention to themselves by clapping their hands one time. The Greeter, Wrapper, and Psychopomp clap twice in response. The Hierophant, in a pleasant tone of voice, welcomes the participants collectively.

It's a wonderful honor to have you join this workshop. It will take about two hours and consist of a few separate sections.
            First we will perform a ceremonial cleansing on this room.
            Second   we   will   sit   down   and   have   a   conversation   about   digital   stress   and   dependency.
            Thirdly,   there's   a   guided   meditation   on   the

nature of computers, networks and encryption. Then we will do a stress test and mindful computing exercise. Finally we will do a second cleansing of the room to end the ceremony. During the whole ceremony, the Psychopomp will take you one by one to our sanctum where you will be initiatied into the inner mysteries of the cyber world.

The only photos taken will be with our consecrated DSLR camera which is not connected to the internet. You will be able to veto the publication of any of our photos of the workshop.

We acknowledge that confronting digital stress in itself can be stressful and risk triggering emotional distress. If at any point you don't feel well during the ceremony, feel free to take appropriate steps to make yourself comfortable, including asking for help from any of us.

B a n i s h i n g

The Hierophant leads the participants in a banishing ritual. To begin with, everyone faces the window where the Hierophant stands. Greeter, Wrapper and Psychopomp stand at each of the other walls.

We will now proceed to clean this room of undue digital influences. First we take a deep breath and reach high into the Cloud. As we exhale, we push deep into the Network. Now we pull in all the data from the Cloud and the Network and form a highly energized data packet between your hands.

Please repeat after me as we push out this data packet: Facebook be Banned!

Now. Please turn to your right. And repeat after me: SnapChat be Banned!

Again: Please turn to your right. And repeat after me: Google be Banned!

Finally. Please turn to your right. And repeat after me: Tinder be Banned!

Please turn towards me again and stretch your arms to the side.

Having banished these forces of digital stress, we will now invoke the Four Guardians to keep them at bay while we perform this ceremony.

Please close your eyes.

In front of you, try and visualize the Sloth, this slow-moving, deliberate animal.

Behind you, in your mind's eye, envision the Fox, that sly and tricky animal.

To your right, visualize the elephant, the animal that never forgets.

To your left, behold the Panda Bear, such a temperate creature.

Now please open your eyes and once again, take a deep breath and reach into the Cloud.

Exhale, and push deep into the Network.

Pull in all the Data from the Cloud and the Network and form a highly energized data packet between your hands.

This time, let the energized data flow slowly through your body as you relax and let go of the influence of the forces of digital stress.

Now please have a seat with your feet in the pool.

W h a t   s t r e s s e s   y o u   o u t ?

The Hierophant sits at the pool and lets a bit of time pass before initiating the discussion.

Please take a little time to think about what brought you here and what you would like to discuss.

A moment passes.

Now let's take a round where each of you tell us, what your name is, what made you decide to apply for this workshop and what you aim to achieve on the other side of it.

From here the discussion flows organically, gently facilitated by the Hierophant who restarts the conversation with simple questions if it slows to a halt.

What stresses you about digital life? Do you sometimes feel dependent on digital services? Do you feel safe in the digital world? What makes you feel unsafe? Do you feel there are any alternatives to the digital services you use? What coping strategies do you use to deal with digital stress?

S t r e s s   t e s t

- Do you use six digits or more to unlock your phone?
- Have you changed the name of your phone?
- Have you edited the notification settings on your phone?
- Do you apply app updates immediately?
- Is your phone's operating system fully updated?
- Have you edited your phone's location settings?
- Do you have less than 50 apps installed on your phone?
- Have you edited which apps can access your contacts?
- Have you edited which apps can access your photos, camera and microphone?
- Have you edited the default settings on your mobile browser?
- Do you use other browser apps than the default on your phone?
- Have you edited the security and privacy settings on your social media accounts?
- Do you use a password manager?
- Do you use long, unique passphrases to lock your accounts?
- Do you use an authenticator app for 2-factor authentication on your accounts?
- Do you use Signal, Wire or WhatsApp to communicate?

ON BEHALF OF:
T h e   S o c i a l   R o b o t

The automation revolution is coming! Soon you can let go of the hard work of carefully maintaining your engaging social media presence and leave it in the caring hands of a robot.

Already now you can enter this future with us as we program artificial intelligences for social media engagement. Post-organic social is here in it is yours for the taking. Start living a care free tomorrow today.

From the invitation to the second How To Quit workshop, June 2018

W   e   l   c   o   m   e

Welcome to How to Quit: On Behalf Of. My name is Maia, and I will be your guide today. These are my associates: Andreas, Jacob, Henrik, and Halfdan. I would like to ask everyone to say their name, and why you are here. My associates will now serve some tea, while I will relay to you the reasons we are here today. We're all here, because we want to quit. We realise
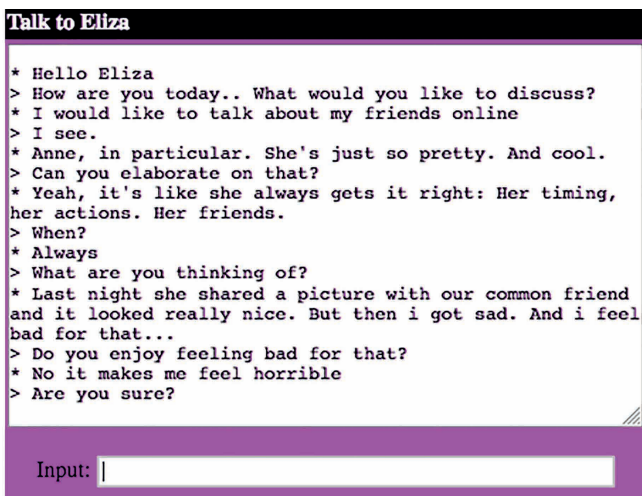
that Facebook is bad for us. Bad, because they experiment with our emotions. Because they allow democratic elections to be tampered with. Because they block women breastfeeding, but allow racist hategroups. Because they track anything and everything we do online and sell us to the highest bidder. Because they care about profit and growth, and not about their user's security, communities or emotional well-being.

Or maybe, you want to quit for more personal reasons. Perhaps, you are feeling anxious. Your timeline induces anxiety, your friend's photos give you FOMO, and the constant pinging in your inbox is giving you stress, distracting you from living your life.

We pour emotional labour into these platforms, and they give us nothing in return. They are a void, ever increasing the demand for your attention, your time, your activity.

Luckily, we live in a time where the AIs are descending into our world. They bring the promise of freedom from hard, physical labour. But they also bring the promise of freedom from unnecessary emotional labour.

Eliza was one such bot. Built for compassion and understanding, she has gotten humans to pour their hearts out since she was incepted in 1960. Bots for therapy; always there, never gets tired of asking you why, of listening, and doesn't cost you a thing.

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Talk to Eliza

* Hello Eliza
> How are you today.. What would you like to discuss?
* I would like to talk about my friends online
> I see.
* Anne, in particular. She's just so pretty. And cool.
> Can you elaborate on that?
* Yeah, it's like she always gets it right: Her timing,
her actions. Her friends.
> When?
* Always
> What are you thinking of?
* Last night she shared a picture with our common friend
and it looked really nice. But then i got sad. And i feel
bad for that...
> Do you enjoy feeling bad for that?
* No it makes me feel horrible
> Are you sure?

Input: |
```

Likewise, bots like @arguetron can take over the heavy toll of arguing with strangers on the internet. She is made to bait them with a statement known to provoke, and then she will continue arguing with them into eternity, by answering different iterations of 'no, you're wrong'. When the people who make the internet hell for the rest of us are distracted arguing with bots who never tire, and who do not take offense at sexist tirades or threads, perhaps the rest of us can have proper discourse again.

Today, we are looking at Facebook and this is the very simple version of what we are building: A bot that will reply for you, if people contact you on Facebook.

A reason a lot of us are reluctant to leave is that Facebook has become a primary means of communication for people. The bot solves that problem: It answers for you, either in a simple response setup, or in a much more elaborate, conversational style. That is up to you.

Now, let's try and see how this works in practice. If you all pull out your laptops, and find a spot, please.

Now, let's try one of these bots to see how it works.

V i s u a l i z a t i o n

You may now close your laptops. Turn your faces toward me and sit in a comfortable position.

We will now commence with a meditation exercise, in which we will bring your bot, your post-organic PA, your better digital self to life.

Please close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Breathe in through the nose, out the mouth. The breathing cycle is repeated three times.

First, I want you to concentrate on why you are here. You are here, because you want to quit. Examine this goal. Why do you want to quit? What joy and light will it bring into your life? What are you leaving behind? Focus on this intention. Why do you want to quit? This is your mantra. Repeat it in your head for every time I sound the bell. Ready?

Sounds the bell ten times.

Now, you have your mantra. Now, I want you to picture who you will let manage your online life. We are going to visualize

your post-organic personal assistant, your better digital self. Take a deep breath in, and breathe out. Imagine you are are sitting in an empty room, the walls are white and natural sunlight is entering the windows.

Your bot is present. You are willing it into existence. Your online avatar. Now think: What does it look like? Does it look like anything? Does it have a body? A gender? Is it looking at you? Does it look like you, or is it different? You get up and open the door, to go outside in the garden. Your bot follows. Does it have legs? Is it walking beside you? You ask the bot how it's doing – How does it answer? Does it have a voice? Is it a pleasant voice? Is it male, female, or something else? What is the nature of the bots reply? Is it friendly? Rude? Funny? How does it relate to the other people in your life, the people it is going to be communicating with on behalf of you? Is it trying to help them? To make them go away? To develop a relationship of its own with them? Have a conversation with your bot. Now, I will sound the bell, and you will open your eyes.

Rings bell.

My associates will now give you a piece of paper, a profile for your bot, to fill out. When you are done, turn to the person next to you and present your bot to them.

Tea is served.

Now, if you will return to your seats, and open your laptops, we will commence to bring your bot to life.

The   personal   costs   of   social   media

- Heavy emotional labour in responding.
- Risk of Timeline-induced anxiety, Facebook envy, FOMO and depression.
- Polarization and manipulation of news discourse induces. stress and creates echo chambers

Five   steps   toward   cyber   wellness

- Change your Facebook profile into a page.
- Enable your chatbot to respond for you when contacted.
- Erase your Messenger and Facebook app from your phone.
- Use an extension like Block Site you from opening Facebook.
- When experiencing cravings, recite your mantra and remember: Your bot is being your better digital self!

E P I L O G U E :
Centre for Cyber Wellness

This has been an experiment in quitting mainstream internet as a possible act of self care and resistance. Rather than overcoming multinational corporations and planetary scale systems of oppression, we ask the questions: Can we change our own system and regain agency and create our own unique outlook? Will this give us some freedom to foster new communities of care?

Looking forward we know the journey is just beginning. But rather than aiming for unrealistic goals, bound to fail, and stressing ourselves each time we digress back into the digital honeypot, we suggest to look at the journey as the goal. In this situation we find that it can help to think of this as a hike into the unknown.

We acknowledge that we are writing from a privileged position. We live in different landscapes, some have much more troubled and dangerous routes to follow. We wish to use our position to leverage care for our friends and for you.

We all live in different realities, but the internet condition is global. If you can use any of this material, please do. Tweak it to your purposes. Remix it for your needs. Hack the system.

This journey can be taken alone, but it is much more fun with friends. If you have questions or would like to come along, do get in touch.

Search the internet, and search your communities. Bring your friends. Take your time. Make alliances and take chances. Trust your intuition. Form support groups, share your knowledge. Make soup, be generous.

Along this journey, orient yourself off the path. Move elsewhere. Small magical pockets and entire universes will reveal themselves if you are open to them. Just as they appear, they will change and fade away. This is an ever changing landscape and big forces are at play.

We live in exciting times.