CAREER

Reels, Doomscrolling, and Your Career: Where Is Your Time Really Going?

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“I’ll just watch a few reels!”

You have just returned from college. Your assignments are waiting, your exams are approaching, and you have been thinking about building your career and learning a new skill. But before getting started, you decide to watch a few reels to relax.

One reel turns into five. Five turn into fifteen. You scroll through funny videos, motivational speeches, celebrity updates, career advice, and snippets of other people's lives. Everything seems so interesting that you keep watching.

Then, you check the clock and realise an hour has passed!

You feel a little guilty, but you tell yourself that you will study later. After dinner, you open your phone again.

And just like that, another evening disappears.

Does this sound familiar?

When Scrolling Becomes a Habit

Meet Areeba, a college student who dreams of building a successful career. She wants to become financially independent, develop her skills, and make her family proud. She has a list of things she wants to learn, courses she wants to complete, and goals she hopes to achieve before graduating.

Yet, every time she sits down to study, her phone seems to call for her attention.

She checks one notification, watches a reel, and then finds herself scrolling through dozens of videos without realising how much time has passed. Sometimes, she watches motivational content about success and productivity, convincing herself that she is doing something useful.

But when she puts her phone away, she has not completed her assignment, practised a new skill, or made progress towards her goals.

She has spent hours consuming content about the life she wants without taking meaningful steps towards building it.

Gradually, Areeba begins to notice that she is struggling to concentrate for long periods. Studying feels more difficult, unfinished tasks keep piling up, and she finds herself reaching for her phone whenever a task becomes challenging or boring.

The problem is not the phone itself. It is that her phone has started deciding how she spends her time.

The Hidden Cost of Doomscrolling

Doomscrolling refers to repeatedly scrolling through content, often negative or distressing news, even when it leaves us feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or emotionally exhausted.

Reels and short-form videos can also encourage prolonged scrolling because there is always something new to watch. Although watching videos is not automatically harmful, spending excessive time on social media can interfere with important parts of everyday life.

Your attention is valuable, and constant distractions can make it harder to focus on what truly matters.

Frequent interruptions may make it difficult to concentrate on studying, completing assignments, reading, or developing complex skills. Spending too much time on your phone can also take time away from sleep, physical activity, face-to-face conversations, and other healthy routines.

Doomscrolling may expose you to a continuous stream of upsetting information, which can increase feelings of stress or anxiety in some people. Meanwhile, watching carefully selected highlights of other people's lives can encourage unhealthy comparisons.

You may start questioning your own progress because someone else appears to be achieving more, earning more, travelling more, or living a better life.

But remember, you are comparing your everyday reality with carefully selected moments from someone else's life.

You do not know their complete story, and their progress does not determine your potential.

Stop Watching Others Build Their Dream Lives

There is nothing wrong with enjoying reels, following creators, or taking a break after a long day. The problem begins when entertainment repeatedly takes priority over the things we say are important to us.

Think about the career you want to pursue. Perhaps you want to become a psychologist, doctor, writer, designer, entrepreneur, or content creator. Every career requires some combination of learning, practice, patience, and consistent effort.

You cannot develop writing skills simply by watching other writers succeed. You cannot become a skilled designer by endlessly viewing other people's designs. And you cannot prepare for your dream career by consuming motivational videos without applying what you learn.

At some point, you need to close the app and begin your own work!

Let social media inspire your goals, not replace the effort required to achieve them.

Instead of spending an hour watching random reels, you could use part of that time to complete a course, practise a skill, read something useful, improve your CV, or explore internship opportunities. These activities may not always feel exciting, but they can help you make meaningful progress over time.

Take Control of Your Time

Areeba eventually realises that waiting to become more disciplined is not enough. She needs to change the habits that keep distracting her.

She begins keeping her phone away while studying. She turns off unnecessary notifications, sets a reasonable daily limit for social media, and avoids scrolling before bedtime. She also creates a simple daily schedule, prioritising her collegework and career-related tasks.

At first, these changes feel uncomfortable. She is used to checking her phone whenever she has a free moment.

However, she gradually begins completing her work on time. She has more opportunities to practise her skills and feels more in control of her day.

She still watches reels. The difference is that she now decides when to watch them instead of allowing one video to lead to another without an end.

You can begin in the same way. Pay attention to how much time you spend scrolling and identify the situations that lead you to reach for your phone unnecessarily. Create boundaries that help you use social media more mindfully.

If you find yourself repeatedly checking your phone, try replacing that habit with a short walk, a few pages of reading, or a focused study session.

You do not need to transform your entire routine overnight. You simply need to start making more conscious choices.

Your Future Deserves Your Attention

One day, you may look back at your college years and remember the opportunities you explored, the skills you developed, the people you met, and the decisions that helped shape your career.

You probably will not remember every reel you watched on an ordinary afternoon!

So, the next time you pick up your phone, pause for a moment and ask yourself: Am I using this time to relax, or am I avoiding something important?

There is no need to feel guilty about every minute spent online. What matters is recognising when a habit begins to take more from your life than it gives.

Your career will not develop in a single day, and neither will your skills. But every hour you invest in learning, every task you complete, and every effort you make gives you an opportunity to grow.

Look after your mental well-being. Protect your sleep. Give your goals the attention they deserve.

Watch the reels if you want to, but do not let them consume the time you need to build your future.

You have a life to live, a career to build, and a version of yourself you are working towards becoming. Do not spend so much time watching other people's lives that you forget to build your own.

Competing interests

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