

important things. You could still respond to emails and other things, but it would be because you decided it was important to communicate something, not because someone else sent you a message and you felt compelled to reply. You'd be much less stressed out, because you don't feel like you need to get through these piles of things to respond to, or worry about people trying to contact you through various channels.

2. Next, address the fears. Think about what specific fears you have — are you afraid people will think you're rude? Are you afraid you'll miss something? Are you afraid you'll lose customers, or get in trouble at work? Figure out what your fears are — there are probably more than one. Now address them with a tiny test — go without responding, just for a few hours. What happened? Did you lose anything? Did you miss anything? Did someone get offended? If nothing bad happens, extend this test — try half a day, or a full day. See what happens. In most cases, nothing bad will happen at all. In a few cases, something negative might happen, but it'll be pretty minor. You'll realize that your fears are mostly ungrounded.

3. Finally, start weaning yourself. If you agree that being free of these compulsions would be a better way of living, start moving towards this life. Again, try just a small test — a couple hours every day when you don't respond to things. Set a time, after this "response-free" block of your day, when you do respond. This way, you're in control — you decide when to respond. Eventually, you might increase your "response-free" zone to half a day or more, but start small.

To be continued