

Good and bad of news fatigue, news avoidance

The information saturation in the world today, thanks to great leaps in information and communications technology, has created two related phenomena among the news-consuming public. These are news fatigue and news avoidance.

First, to news fatigue. This is "a state of mental and emotional exhaustion caused by overwhelming exposure to excessive, often negative, 24/7 news cycles and social media, leading to feelings of anxiety, helplessness, or total news avoidance."

Then there is news avoidance. This is "the intentional or unintentional behaviour of staying away from news, driven by feelings of negativity, overload, or distrust."

While these can be described as two sides of the same coin, or cause and consequence, their impact is in many ways different in that one primarily affects the media while the other mainly affects the news consumer.

The media is affected by news avoidance because when audiences do not consume the content that they [media] has painstakingly put together at a very high cost, then it comes off as a wasted effort. In time, it begins to show up in numbers – circulation, audience ratings, prime time viewing, etc.

News avoidance therefore, hits at the economic nerve of the media. So when many people avoid news over a prolonged period, chances are that the media houses they trust may not be still in the trade at the time these consumers come around to want credible news again.

"If people keep choosing to distract themselves rather than reading reliable news coverage of what's happening around them, then eventually [media] outlets... won't be able to keep going," said deputy ed-

How do you avoid getting afflicted with news fatigue and at the same time not succumb to news avoidance?

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itor-in-chief of *Haaretz* Noa Landau at the March 2026 Reuters Memorial Lecture.

News fatigue tends to arise out of constant engagement of consumers with news – from reading newspapers, listening to radio, watching television, and scrolling the internet, it gets to a point where it affects their mental state. At this point, it becomes a trigger or a gauge that you are taking in too much information. And many media commentators argue that there is a silver lining to this.

"News fatigue itself is not a bad thing. It's just a signal that your body and mind give you for a mental break. You have consumed so much information, and your brain just wants a refresh before it absorbs new information. That's how it works. So I think it's actually a positive thing because it gives you a sign to do something else and gives you a signal that maybe you're absorbing too much information." Take Nicole Moorefield (see www.unc.edu).

Momentarily stepping away from the news is believed to help one's mental health

and overall health.

News avoidance, on the other hand, does not offer such mental health or general health relief. Instead, it could predispose one to ignorance and oblivion.

Remember, as journalist Reuters' global managing editor Nick Tattersall said during the organisation's 2026 Memorial Lecture, "People are tired of the news, but the reality doesn't stop just because you're tired of it. And if you go to sleep or watch Netflix, the news doesn't go away. It only becomes worse."

So besides the fact that news will not go away when we avoid it, avoiding news altogether predisposes one to several disadvantages, which include a lack of awareness about issues that directly affect their daily lives, and increased susceptibility to misinformation, especially if one relies solely on social media algorithms. News avoidance also renders people less informed about services, rights, or opportunities, thereby widening existing social and economic inequalities."

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Experts say this requires "a shift from passive consumption to an intentional, curated approach". This means you limit the amount of time you expose yourself to news, and select the news you want to consume by avoiding sensational stories, etc.

Also, one should "practice 'constructive' news consumption" which involves "focusing on understanding the 'why' and 'how' of a story, rather than just the hourly updates", as well as on stories "that focus on solutions, progress, and hope, not just 'doom and gloom'."

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