

Your Pandemic Tech Habits

Therapy from afar. Books on the iPad. Friends via screens. Here's the tech that's sustained.

A rock musician and a chamber orchestra violinist discovered apps that allowed them to play music with others far away. A woman in Toronto says she's learned how to take courses and order groceries online, but she longs to be with her great-grandsons.

I wrote last week about our pandemic-altered year of technology, and I asked On Tech readers to tell us what you loved or loathed about a more virtual life.

Some of you said you had formed new habits that you think might stick, including meditating online and gathering weekly with pals over Zoom. Some readers said they were grateful for virtual stand-ins but could not wait to get back to the library and hugging their family members. (Virtual hugs to you all)

Thank goodness tech has helped us muddle through a crisis. Also, just ugh to all of it.

Here is a taste of readers' views on technology that has helped them cope. The responses have been lightly edited. And wave hello to our On Tech editor Hanna Ingber for plucking a selection of your new habits:

- My 3-and-half-year-old grandson lives in Portland, Maine. I read an online book while he follows along with a hard copy in front of him. This year, reading together has strengthened our bond at a distance. He calls me all of the time, asking me to please read him another story. — *Starker White, Rockford, Ill.*

- Because I've watched so much Netflix that I got bored, I started drawing cartoons that highlight how our lives have changed during the pandemic and shared them on Instagram. — *Irina Blok, San Francisco*

- A new habit I've picked up is reading e-books on my iPad. When libraries closed down, I didn't know how I was going to get my fix in. To be honest, I miss holding a physical book in my hand, turning a page and the satisfying feeling of closing the book when you've finished. I can't wait to go in and browse the shelves for hidden gems! — *Elizabeth Price, Seattle*

- My new tech habit is meditation class by Zoom. I have never before been able to successfully meditate (monkey mind to the max). But being at home, in my most comfortable chair in front of the fireplace with a cup of coffee has worked for me. Meditation has been a great tool to help me cope with the stress and anxiety of this terrible, no-good year. — *Julie Lindmark, Shoreview, Minn.*

- I've been geographically distant from my old band mates for over 20 years. During lockdown, we discovered we could use an app called JamKazam to play music together over the internet in real time. We've been doing that every Sunday for the past 10 months. Rock on! — *Gregg Butensky, San Francisco*

Since May, I've played in about 100 chamber-music sessions using Jamulus, which has virtually eliminated delay in audio communication between players even hundreds of miles apart. I've been able to maintain my social ties with my musician friends and make some new musical friends as well. Last, but not least, I am encouraged to keep practicing. (Nothing like knowing one has to play a tricky first-violin part the next day.) — *Tom Frenkel, Sunnyside, N.Y.*

My new habit is ordering groceries online and no contact pickup! I LOVE it. I am 68 and retired and have very bad eyesight. My “shoppers” have done an outstanding job! It’s a true improvement that should remain in place. — *Patricia Cornett Farley, Bluefield, W. Va.*

- I am 86 years old and haven’t hugged anyone in my family for one year. But I’ve learned to use Zoom and to order my groceries online, both of which helped me keep myself fed, independent and sane. I am taking a great course on rebel Russian authors. I’ve attended services at my synagogue without having to put on my snow boots. I’ve gone to art galleries and operas without having to dress up or worry about where to park.

Still, I miss being out in the world. Will that ever be natural for me again? Time is precious. How will I ever make it up? Will my little great-grandsons know me when we can finally be together after a year or more apart? — *Sandra Atlin, Toronto*

- My psychologist is now doing telehealth visits, and I love it. It’s my hope that this becomes a permanent option in the future. Not only for me, but for the multitudes of people who need mental health care and aren’t in a position to access it in person. — *Laurel Mollison, Jacksonville, Fla.*

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