



Shad Unplugged

We are responding to desires from youth that want to develop healthy boundaries with social media platforms to create more space for themselves without the pull to respond to notifications instantly. We have taken that request and designed Shad programs that rethink the availability of social media throughout the day.

Welcome to Shad Unplugged -- campuses that provide basic phones and/or limit access to social media outside of Shad. These Shad communities will encourage participants to plug into their social networks via text and phone calls, allowing the Shad community to have more connection time together.

We have complicated relationships with our smartphones and our social media networks. On one hand, they keep us connected and in-touch with the people who mean the most to us. On the other hand, for some people they may make us feel like we must be connected – and that there’s a social expectation and pressure that we should be available. It may keep us up at night, disconnected from the present moment, and perpetually elsewhere. If you feel this pressure, you’re not alone - research increasingly shows that for many, more time on our smartphones is associated with being less happy and satisfied with life.

We see this tension quite strongly at Shad - you’re away from home (perhaps for the first time), looking forward to a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and surrounded by new and interesting people from across Canada. But it’s also uncomfortable and difficult to make new friends in person, particularly when your existing networks and screen habits are waiting in your pocket, just an unlock swipe away. At the end of the month, some Shads tell us how much they LOVED their program - but also that their biggest regrets were not putting away their phones, not taking all those small opportunities to talk to each other, and not fully investing in others at their campus. This is not easy to do when you’ve got other stuff going on! **For those who genuinely want to be “all in” for their Shad experience, we’d like you to consider Shad Unplugged.**

What is Shad Unplugged?

Shad’s Unplugged is for participants who want to be less dependent on, distracted by, and/or connected to their existing social networks. It’s tough to build a new community when your mind is elsewhere - even if it’s a quick check-in on Snapchat. Imagine taking on this personal growth challenge, surrounded by an entire campus of supporters, who want the same thing for themselves. At Unplugged campuses, you and your fellow Shads will be making a commitment to temporarily disengage from your usual online communities for the month. Think of going Unplugged as a social media and technology reset and a means to fully immerse yourself in the program, and amp up your investment in yourself.



What exactly does this mean for my day-to-day?

The details may look different at each of the Unplugged campuses.

Some campuses may exchange your smart phone for a basic phone. These phones only have access to texting and phone calls and all your favorite people will still be able to reach you this way. You will have access to your phone all day long and can call or text when you feel it is appropriate for you.

Other campuses may provide structured time to check devices and may require participants to remain offline or keep their phone in a separate area for periods of time.

Computers, laptops, cameras...what about those?

We're still a STEAM program, and we love technology! You will still have access to all your learning devices - laptops, cameras, tablets, are all valuable tools and encouraged. We just encourage you to take this opportunity to reset boundaries around how, and how readily, you engage with social media while working with these devices. Limiting smartphone access can make it easier to maintain new boundaries.

What about my friends and family who aren't necessarily tied to social media?

We'll **never** stop you from talking to anyone in your community. We just recognize that there may be a time and place to connect with the folks back home, and in many cases our typical smartphone habits have erased those boundaries. Shad Unplugged is about intentionally setting those boundaries again. There will be many opportunities to connect with your current networks. We hope you'll experience the value of intentionally resetting those boundaries and see how this may transform your Shad experience.

What happens if I have an emergency?

You will always be connected and reachable.

1. You can be reached 24/7 on the Shad campus phone.
2. You may have a phone that can receive calls and texts 24/7.
3. Everyone's parents/guardians will have access to the Program Director's phone number.

But my family, friends, and/or significant other(s) expect me to stay connected!

This is true - after all, they'll miss you and they love you, and they're super curious about this big adventure that you're on. We will be providing more details in advance of the program but for now you may want to share with them that:

- being unplugged is an expectation of the program (i.e., it's not your fault!),
- you'll reach out frequently during the month, but just won't be reachable at every moment,
- you're trying something new for a little while, and you'll let them know how it went,
- it's important to you personally,
- it's only 27 days, and it'll go by fast (it really will!)
- you'll have MANY amazing stories for them when you're back

Reassuring them that you can't wait to get back to them would also help - after all, their feelings matter too, and those might be reason enough NOT to unplug. Which brings us to...

Will I end up at an Unplugged campus if that is not my preference?

No. It's important that Shads placed at Unplugged campuses *want* to have the unplugged experience. An Unplugged experience might not be for you, and that is completely OK! Perhaps you're not in a position to put up boundaries around your existing social network for the month. Or perhaps your parents and guardians are not okay with not being able to reach you instantly. Or perhaps this just does not sound appealing at all, and you don't see the value in it. All of these are good reasons not to choose an unplugged experience.

If I want an Unplugged experience, am I guaranteed a spot at one of the Unplugged campuses?

Even if you ask to be considered for an unplugged campus you may still end up at one of our other campuses, depending on the parameters we use to place participants. All Shad Program Directors value an unplugged environment and will encourage all participants to take a step back from their smartphone to whatever degree is comfortable for them.

Okay - I'm curious, and this sounds like it'll work for me. What happens next?

Visit www.shad.ca/apply to start your application and choose the ShadOnCampus – live in – Unplugged program option.