

## Dan Rollman, Gretchen Rubin, and Campbell Brown Interview Transcript

BROWN: This Friday night brings a different kind of Sabbath. There is a movement to just give it a rest, and it being your Blackberry, Facebook, Twitter. Can you live without e-mails for a day? The National Day of Unplugging urges the overstressed and overworked to log off and tune out technology for 24 hours.

And joining me right now is Dan Rollman who launched the Sabbath Manifesto, and Gretchen Rubin who's the author of "The Happiness Project."

Welcome to both of you.

DAN ROLLMAN, CREATOR, "SABBATH MANIFESTO": Thank you.

GRETCHEN RUBIN, AUTHOR, "THE HAPPINESS PROJECT": Thank you.

BROWN: So, Dan, let me start with you. You are literally telling people to unplug for 24 hours. That has made most of my staff I think break out into a cold sweat, just the thought of it. But there is like this line, I guess, where, you know, we -- between us mastering technology and technology mastering us. And like our ability to find that balance is hard.

ROLLMAN: Yes, it definitely feels like an addiction of sorts, like you become cognizant of yet how permanently you're, you know, always connected in one form or another. So -  
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BROWN: So that's the idea behind this, basically?

ROLLMAN: Yes, just to sort of, you know, take a step back and you know -- I mean, it really came out of recognition that as I was spending more and more time with technology, it was just getting harder and harder to, you know, connect to people. And you know, I was aware of my attention span becoming shorter and so on. So, yes, it evolved out of that, I guess.

BROWN: And, Gretchen, 66 percent of Americans own a cell phone. It's a huge convenience.

RUBIN: Yes.

BROWN: And it's not always a negative either.

RUBIN: Right.

BROWN: I mean, we talk about us needing to connect to each other more. And people do use their cell phones to, you know, send photos or text messages or whatever of their children.

RUBIN: Right.

BROWN: And you know, it does keep us connected in a way too. I mean it's not all bad, right?

RUBIN: No, I mean, that's the thing. Technology, it's a good servant, but a bad master. And it can give you wonderful access to more people. You can keep strong ties with other people and get all this great information and sometimes it can free you from your desk. But the problem comes when you feel like you just have a cubicle in your pocket all day long and you can never escape. So you either feel distracted, like you can't have a thought to yourself because you're constantly being interrupted, or you feel hunted like you're always, you know, on a leash. You can never escape. You can never sort of feel free and feel relaxed.

BROWN: So when does it become a bad thing? I mean, when do you say that somebody has really crossed the line?

RUBIN: I think people know it. The more I talk to people about "Happiness" it feels like people are searching for that boundary. They want that balance. They want the benefits but then they also want to be able to find a way to break free whether by you taking a day off or walking out of a couple of hours or using computer programs that, you know, won't let them use the Internet for a couple of hours.

BROWN: Right.

RUBIN: There's different strategies people are trying.

BROWN: And, Dan, I know you say one of the things you want is really to get people sort of interacting person to person again in a way that we haven't for a while.

ROLLMAN: Yes. You know, this is by no means an anti-technology movement. This isn't a movement -- you know, like you say there's obviously a million great things that have come out of technology and the Internet and so forth. So, yes, we're the group that I worked on to develop this with, we're going to do this evening actually a cell phone-free dinner. So we're all going to unplug our cell phones and we're going to, 40 or 50 people just be together and not be compulsively checking our Twitter feeds and e-mails and text messages and so forth.

BROWN: That may be a way to start out, frankly.

RUBIN: Right.

BROWN: Because there are a lot of people who couldn't do this cold turkey kind of thing.

RUBIN: No. And you see it also with people like they think they're having quality time with their child, but they're checking their e-mail all the time. And since people are sort of, they're going through the motions but they're not really there. They're not really kind of in the moment. And so by turning off your device, you sort of keep yourself experiencing the moment.

BROWN: How will you judge this to have been a success?

ROLLMAN: You know, it's all personal. So by no means are we trying to preach or say, you know, that this is the right way and wrong way to live your life or engage with technology. So I just speak from a personal level if I'm able to for the next 24 hours, you know, be off of my computer and be off of my cell phone. And you know, I've gone old school and made plans to meet people tomorrow at a given time and a given location. So, you know, I think it will just be certainly a challenge, but a really rewarding experience to just be away from that. Not to wake up and check my, you know, check my cell phone within 60 seconds of being away. Not to, you know, watch TV while I'm checking my e-mail and so forth.

BROWN: Well, good luck with that tomorrow.

ROLLMAN: Thank you. It's going to be a challenge.

BROWN: Dan Rollman, thank you very much, and Gretchen Rubin. Good to have you guys here. Thanks.