



## Now is the Time to Upgrade

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As the month of *Elul* and the *Yomim Noraim* (High Holidays) quickly approach, now is the perfect time to reevaluate. With internet devices and their distractions being ever-present in our lives, what better way to enhance our spiritual lives and reconnect with what's important than to make a pledge (a *Kabolah*) to limit our online interactions?

Small, attainable goals can make a significant impact. Consider committing to one or more of the following through Yom Kippur:

- Strengthening your filter settings
- Removing an app you frequently use
- Turning off your phone during dinner
- Putting your phone aside during in-person interactions
- Designating a specific room in your home for online activities
- Leaving your phone outside the room or Shul when Davening  
*or create your own custom goal!*

Each small step you take communicates your dedication to reconnecting with others, yourself, and your productivity, ultimately fostering a deeper connection with G-d Himself. To encourage these commitments, TAG Baltimore's Project Screenfree is offering a raffle for those who take on at least one pledge between Elul and Yom Kippur. Prizes include a full set of Artscroll Machzorim, a beautiful Shofar, a stunning Succah tapestry, and more. Register today at [tagbaltimore.org/screenfree](https://tagbaltimore.org/screenfree), or call 410-449-1824, to join the Baltimore community in disconnecting to reconnect!



I teach 13-year-old girls, and they don't usually share much about their personal lives in my class. In preschool, the teachers really have to plug up their ears to avoid hearing secrets shared by their little students. I once heard a preschool Morah announce at orientation, "I won't believe the things your kids say about you if you don't believe what they say about me!"

Recently, we did an exercise in class about keeping the attention of your listener. One girl in the center had to have two girls on the sides of her talk at once, while she bounced her attention back and forth, attempting to respond to them both. The girl in the center commented, "I feel like my mother!" Then another girl in the class scowled and said, "My mother doesn't listen to me when I talk. She's always looking at her phone, scrolling away."

I felt terrible. I didn't want to believe her. Then I thought to myself, what do my kids tell their teachers about me?



Finally, some time with my husband alone! We left the kids with my mom, and we're off on vacation for three blissful days. As we were sitting on the airplane, I realized that I needed to do something to ensure we get the special time together without distractions. Being honest with myself, I realized that Instagram is always calling my name. I am fascinated by all the different posts of fashion and talent I follow, but it does take a lot of my attention. Feeling good about my resolution, I took out my phone and deleted Instagram for the few days we were going to be away. My husband noticed and applauded. Now we could really enjoy each other's company.

It's a difficult stage when your boys grow up and go to yeshiva. I was really fortunate that my son stayed in town and didn't go away from home for high school, but he spent most of his time in yeshiva.

One day, I wanted to say hello, so I popped by to see him during his break. He was very sweet and thanked me for coming. Then, he asked if he could use my smartphone to order something he needed from Amazon.

I know it's challenging to sleep away from home most of the week and not be able to get things he might need, so I allowed it. After a few minutes of waiting while he was ordering things on my phone, I started to feel impatient.

I came to see my son, but it felt like he appreciated being able to use the internet more than spending time with me. Tapping my watch to show him the time, I said I had to go, and he handed me back my phone. Next time I visit, I will leave my phone at home so I can spend quality time, and not be just a walking internet.



Carpool rules our lives in Baltimore. It affects our work hours and supper schedules, baby naps, and car purchase choices. A very important part of carpool is communication. Whether it's to tell your fellow drivers that your child is not coming that morning, to beg the driver to give your child another minute to come out, or to apologize profusely for forgetting it was your turn that Sunday afternoon, communication is key. I personally find WhatsApp the easiest forum to use to connect to my group of carpool families.

The trouble started when one of our group announced that she chose to delete WhatsApp because it was too addictive for her and kept distracting her from her life. I'm not going to lie, I was worried about how it would affect our frantic carpool messaging. Then I took a breath and realized that deep down, I valued her decision, and I was going to help her. I called her up and told her that I would take it upon myself to keep her informed of any changes or last-minute information that was posted. She was so grateful, and I felt that I triumphed by helping someone else make the changes she needed in her life to be in control.

**DID YOU KNOW?** When TAG installs a filter, you, the customer, choose what to allow and what to block. Plus, once the filter is installed, many changes can be made remotely, without the customer coming into the TAG office.



In the last two years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has exploded in popularity, with the introduction of ubiquitous platforms like Chat-GPT and other AI-services and devices. AI is not a new technology, but it is now more accessible to the public. Essentially, AI enables computers to learn from experience, recognize patterns, and make decisions on their own. Services like Chat-GPT have trained AI with vast amounts of information, allowing users to converse with AI chat services through typing, speaking, and texting, as if they're interacting with a real person.

This is a fascinating new frontier, but it comes with many risks and pitfalls. Now users can spend countless hours on AI websites and apps typing and talking to virtual friends knowledgeable on a wide range of topics. Users prompt AI to create realistic images and videos, original music, and voice recordings. Now, when you watch a video of a well-known personality saying or doing something, it's hard to tell whether it's an authentic recording or whether it was created with AI.

Most of the popular services and apps block inappropriate content, but those limits are not perfect, nor do they meet everyone's standards. Plus, numerous AI services are available without such content restrictions. Filters can block many of these websites or add stronger filtering to them, but there are AI services you can call or text, even on a Kosher phone, completely unfiltered.

The future of AI holds great potential, but significant risks and uncertainties. As it continues to advance, we must stay vigilant in protecting ourselves and our families, always mindful of the challenges alongside the benefits.



Maybe you see yourself as a responsible internet user, and aren't addicted to harmful or time-wasting content. However, there are several compelling reasons for everyone to install a filter on their phone or computer.

Online content is deliberately designed to engage users and divert their attention. After watching an innocent how-to video, sites like YouTube auto-play thinly related clips -- a funny cat video, a basketball game highlight, etc. Soon 45 minutes have passed, instead of the productivity you intended. It's also easy to unintentionally view objectionable images, videos, or websites by mistyping a search term or

clicking a clever advertisement. Filters help ensure you only access content aligned with your values and intentions. When you install a filter you promote internet safety for your family and all those around you. It role-models responsible online behavior to your children, something they will remember when it's time for them to make their own decisions. Filters protect you from cyber threats, like malware and viruses, by restricting access to harmful websites, and they protect children or vulnerable individuals who may inadvertently view inappropriate content or interact with strangers. Remember, your filter is not just for you. It's for anyone who accesses your device.

Like wearing a seatbelt, a filter is a responsible choice for everyone online. Very few regular internet users manage to stay completely safe and focused online. Take the step to filter your internet devices -- it's a proactive measure that benefits every responsible internet user.

## What is TAG Baltimore?

TAG (Technology Awareness Group) is an organization that provides education, guidance, and filtering solutions for the technology needs of our community. Our objective is to empower people to use technology in a safe and responsible fashion. Mordechai Dixler is the TAG Baltimore Director, and the president of the board is Moshe Herzog. Together with the incredibly dedicated TAG staff, the office is open and efficiently servicing customers five nights a week, with daytime appointments available.

## How does TAG help people?

TAG provides various customizable filter solutions for laptops, smartphones and basic phones. The office is staffed with trained volunteers who use their expertise to provide options for the varied needs of our customers. We constantly review available features to customize the products. In this past year alone, TAG Baltimore has assisted over 6500 people from across the entire community.

## Does TAG charge for their services?

TAG does not charge for consultation services, or for filter installations and customized setups. The fees for products that TAG recommends and installs are paid directly to the filter companies.

## What solutions does TAG offer?

The products we recommend are thoroughly researched and tested by experts at TAG International. These solutions are tailored for personal preferences and maximum flexibility and also provide superb levels of customer support.

## Is TAG Baltimore connected to TAG offices in other cities?

We are fortunate to be a part of and benefit from the larger TAG global network. The TAG offices around the world leverage each other's knowledge, expertise and experience to best support our customers. It is not uncommon for someone in the Toronto office to ask a question, be answered by Chicago, have Manchester and Houston chime in, with Lakewood, France and Cleveland offering ideas as well. From Panama to Melbourne and from Boro Park to Antwerp, TAG offices everywhere are united in assisting the greater community with technology

safety. TAG also has direct access to company representatives from all the products that we recommend and offer ensuring quick responses for any issue.

## Does TAG sell kosher phones in the office?

TAG has teamed up with SafeCell and SafeTelecom to bring Baltimore kosher phone options available for on site purchase. We sell basic flip phones, Waze only devices and smartphones with pre-approved apps and no browser.

## Where is TAG Baltimore located?

Come visit TAG's expansive new office! Through a generous grant from the Star-K, the office was beautifully renovated and furnished. The welcoming, spacious waiting area has reading material, light refreshments and fresh coffee available for all our

customers. The office has multiple consultation rooms and a conference room for larger meetings as needed. Come visit us at is 201 Milford Mill Rd. Suite 103, Baltimore, MD 21208, right across the street from our old office and the Star-K office.

## Are appointments needed?

For a daytime meeting you do need an appointment, and for evening hours appointments are highly recommended as they help us

manage our staff and workflow. In the evenings walk-ins are welcome and we will assist you as quickly as possible. To schedule an appointment please visit our website at [tagbaltimore.org](http://tagbaltimore.org) or call us at 410-449-1824.

## NEW Does TAG have internet kiosks?

Yes, the office recently opened internet kiosks to provide filtered internet for those who choose not to have internet in their home. Users register for an account and pay a nominal fee for time on the computer. Kiosks are now open daytime M-Th 12-5pm, and during our evening hours S-Th 8-9:30pm.

## What are TAG's plans for the future?

Our goal is to expand our services, providing more office hours, Shul filter drives, school liaison events, and informational expos.

## How can I contact TAG?

Our website is [tagbaltimore.org](http://tagbaltimore.org). We can be reached via email at [help@tagbaltimore.org](mailto:help@tagbaltimore.org) or by phone at 410-449-1824.



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