

Beat Digital Burnout

The science behind rest and recharging in an always-on digital world

DR KRISTY
GOODWIN

You can't be fully 'on' if you're never 'off'.



WHY WE NEED TO UNPLUG

Spending time offline and away from our devices is vital for our stress, physical health, mental wellbeing, performance and ideation. Our stress levels have increased substantially in recent years because (i) we've removed some of the natural buffers which counteracted stress (predictable start and end of the day, sleep and physical movement all helped to bring us to a natural baseline) and (ii) we've added to our stress load because of our digital technology use. We're biologically designed to cope with short, complete stress cycles, but in our digital world we're constantly bombarded by micro-stressors. Taking regular breaks is essential for peak-performance. Just like race cars have pit stops, so too do you need to invest in your rest.



BURNOUT

The World Health Organisation classified burnout as an occupational phenomenon "resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." It is characterised by three dimensions:

1. feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
2. increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; &
3. reduced professional efficacy.

Digital burnout is fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity from digital tools. Want to know your risk of digital burnout?



TYPES OF BREAKS TO BEAT BURNOUT

1. **Micro-** regular, short daily breaks (5-10 minutes). Your body has an ultradian rhythm meaning that it naturally goes through peaks and troughs roughly every 90 minutes.
2. **Meso-** at least 2 hours/week at predictable times off; and
3. **Macro-** half to full days off each month.

These are minimum effective 'doses'. Micro-breaks are most effective at offsetting burnout. Digital burnout is prevalent because of our increased digital load, 'always on' culture and digital ways of working that are incongruent with our biological blueprint.

DIGITAL BURNOUT

One of the biggest threats to modern teachers is digital burnout. Why? Our digital load has increased substantially in recent years thanks to advances in digital technologies (especially emails & digital communication tools), we're working in ways that are incongruent with our neurobiology (multi-tasking, having constant virtual meetings, working for long stretches of time) and we've perpetuated an 'always on' culture, where employees feel they need to be seen to be instantly responsive to emails and messages, as they see this as a marker of productivity. Digital burnout is fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity from overuse of digital devices. Digital burnout can result from excessive or unsustainable digital habits. This is why it's imperative that teams establish their digital guardrails- explicitly stating the norms, behaviours and principles around digital tool usage and hybrid habits. Take Dr Kristy's **Digital Burnout Barometer Assessment**.

About Dr Kristy

Having personally experienced how our always-on digital culture is compromising people's wellbeing and is counter to optimal and sustainable performance, award-winning researcher and speaker Dr Kristy Goodwin is on a mission to promote employee wellbeing and bolster workplace productivity in an always-on digital world.

As one of Australia's digital wellbeing and productivity experts, she shares practical brain-based hacks to tame tech habits and the latest evidence-based strategies to decode the neurobiology of peak performance in the technological era.

Senior business leaders and HR executives from the country's top organisations engage Dr Kristy to help them promote employee digital wellbeing and performance. Her roster of clients includes NSW Department of Education, Queensland Department of Education, Apple, Westpac, Deutsche Bank, Bank of Queensland, DLA Piper, Westfield, Randstad, the Reserve Bank of Australia, NSW Health, Cuscal, State Street, National Broadband Network and Foxtel.



WEBSITE

LINKED IN



INSTAGRAM

Beat Digital Burnout

Boost your performance and wellbeing with unplugged time

DR KRISTY
GOODWIN

Rest is a responsibility, not a reward.



COMPONENTS OF 'GOOD REST'

REMNAC- **rest** by closing your eyes for 10 seconds (to give your occipital lobe a break), **exposure to light** to help boost focus and minimise eye damage, **movement**, to boost neurotransmitters like dopamine and noradrenaline, get a dose of greentime (as 40 seconds in **nature** can reduce your cortisol levels), have some **autonomy** as to what you elect to do in your rest period and **connect** with others (even if it's a conversation on the phone). Schools need to embrace cultural change where rest is revered and seen as an essential part of a productive work ethic. Your pre-frontal cortex (the part of your brain that's responsible for problem-solving, working memory) only has a 4-6 hour battery life. When we rest we enter the default mode network, also known as the mind-wandering mode, where we come up with innovative ideas or solve problems we've spent months agonising over.



MICRO-HABITS FOR DIGITAL WELLBEING-

Prioritise your **sleep**- have a digital curfew 60 minutes before you go to sleep, keep devices out of bedrooms (if in bedrooms keep them on silent *and* hidden from your line of sight), wear Blue Light Blocking glasses if you have to use devices at night (I recommend **Baxter Blue**- use the code 'DRKRISTY' for 10% discount), get 90 minutes of exposure to sunlight (preferably early in morning), create power-down rituals and a landing zone for devices (I recommend **InCharge** box- use the code 'DRKRISTY' for a \$25 discount).

Move regularly as it creates neurotransmitters (such as dopamine, BDNFs & norepinephrine) that help with stress & focus. Take walking meetings & include micro-movement breaks throughout your day.



MICRO-HABITS FOR DIGITAL WELLBEING-

Manage your **digital load**- do your deep work in your chronotype's peak-performance window (work *with* your neurobiology)- discover your chronotype and receive your individualised report **here** (use the code CHRONOVIP for free access). Disable non-essential notifications, bundle essential notifications to come to you at suitable times & create VIP lists. Put your phone out of sight when doing focused work (remember, just seeing your phone reduces cognitive performance by 10%). Working online is also mentally taxing, so we need to work in sprints, not marathons. Try to set your workday up to work in 90-minute intervals (give or take, according to your ultradian rhythm). This will also help with memory recall. Remove your tech-temptations from your home screen and mono-task, don't multi-task (as it depletes glucose, increases cortisol & sends information to striatum and not hippocampus).

“ OUR 'ALWAYS ON' CULTURE ISN'T SERVING US... IT IS ENSLAVING US.”

Establish your school's 'digital guardrails'

Schools need to clearly articulate their 'digital guardrails'- the norms, behaviours, practices and principles surrounding digital tools. For example, what's the expected response rate on internal emails vs parent emails? How will communication channels be managed? Do you have a 'communication escalation plan' in the case of an urgent situation? What are your virtual/hybrid meeting protocols? Communicate your tech-pectations to your colleagues, parents and other stakeholders so you have peace-of-mind that you can switch off. Find out more here.



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& REPORT