



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient You

Getting Your Break Fix

Why We Need to
Pause for Productivity



Longer Hours, Shorter Returns...

Remember that 80's classic *Everybody's Working for the Weekend*? Well, considering how much time Americans commit to their work, maybe they should change the lyrics to *Everybody's Working on the Weekend*. Technologies that allow us to stay connected to our jobs 24/7 have us working longer, uninterrupted hours—seemingly helping us power through projects and stay on task.

However, contrary to popular belief, constant connectivity may *not* be the best path to productivity. Decades of research show that mindfully disconnecting by taking regular breaks from work and availing ourselves of unused vacation days ups productivity more than driving ourselves to exhaustion. And while many of us wear tirelessness as a badge of honor, the real prize is being able to maximize efficiency without having to sacrifice resilience and personal wellbeing.

Give Me a Break. Seriously.

The quest for better productivity isn't new. For as long as we've been working, we've been looking for hacks to get the most out of our efforts.

The science around productivity shifted significantly during Henry Ford's time. Ford, who some call the father of modern productivity, the genius behind the assembly line, made some keen discoveries about efficiency by observing his employees on the job. Modern productivity research has further reinforced his findings, for example:



Overtime Hangover

Ford observed that workers were **less** productive when working more than 8 hours in a shift. Additional studies show that overextended workers are more prone to errors later into long shifts. This becomes a double hit to company efficiency when workers must spend additional time the following workday cleaning up late-shift errors. Not only does this pattern seriously impact company productivity, but it can also affect personal and team resilience.

Optimal Work Week

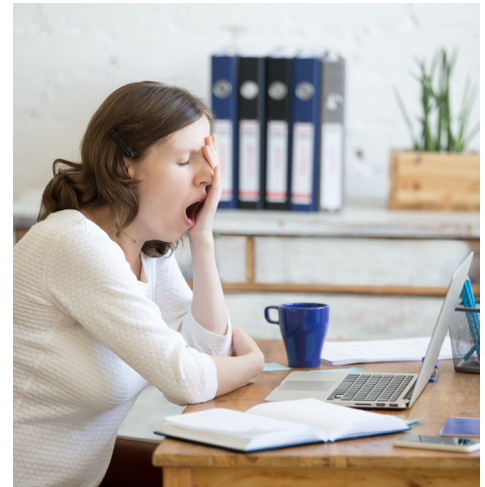
Ford made another surprising discovery. By deliberately switching back and forth between five and six-day work weeks, he found that workers produced more during the five-day work week than they did in six.

Studies on human cognition and the limits of attention help explain these findings. Forcing our brains to maintain prolonged focus, especially after hours, will invariably dry up our attention reservoirs in much the same way that constantly drawing from a well depletes the amount of water. Our brains, like the well, need time to replenish or else they'll run dry.

That's not to say that we need to abandon our work ethic altogether. Rather, we can get more out of that ethic if we apply it wisely.

Science tells us that working in relatively short, intense bursts followed by pauses to recharge can help maximize productivity. That golden ratio can be different for everyone (though one company found employees who took 17-minute breaks for every 52 minutes of work were the most productive).

Whether you follow a specific formula like that or not, the importance of breaks cannot be understated. Small breaks throughout the workday help improve productivity. Longer breaks—like vacations, days and weekends off—bolster our mood, help us do better at our jobs, and may even help stave off illness and keep us healthier.



Becoming an Escape Artist

Our instincts to always go above and beyond can sometimes discourage us from taking much needed, restorative time off. But we may want to reconsider that position. Science tells us that taking short- and long-term breaks can help us be more productive, healthier, and resilient. Here are some ideas for committing to, and making the most of, needed downtime:



Make a Clean Break

A true break means just that—taking a complete break from work. No glancing at emails, brainstorming solutions or shooting out text messages.

- If you can't power down entirely, you can shut down work-related e-mail and messaging apps, and turn off notifications.
- Shake up your routine by doing something out of the ordinary, like visiting a museum or taking a stroll down a path you've never explored.
- Take a metaphorical journey, and get lost in a book that ignites your imagination.



Don't Go It Alone

Taking breaks and trips with others has been shown to help facilitate and augment the benefits of disconnecting. By scheduling your breaks with a friend, you'll have someone to enjoy the experience with. They can also hold you accountable if you get the urge to check your phone.



Go with the Flow

Flow is the body-mind state that arises when we're fully immersed in an activity, taking a break from our typically wandering thought patterns. We can achieve this therapeutic state by:

- Revisiting an old, or taking up a new, hobby. Gardening is an excellent choice because it also gets you outdoors and in touch with nature.
- Practicing a musical instrument and other activities with repetitive, rhythmic motions can have a calming effect on the body and mind.



Time Travel

OK, not actually. But, just as [anticipation helps strengthen relationships](#), studies have shown that even in the planning stages of a vacation, the brain gets a healthy break anticipating the fun you're going to have. In other words, thinking about chilling on the beach is almost as good as chilling on the beach. So, don't skimp on the preparation: plan, imagine and savor the thought of your next big or small escape.

For even more ways to help cultivate mindfulness and resilience, visit the Resilience Hub™ at www.ConcernResilienceHub.com regularly. (First time users may be asked to enter their company ID.)

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If you find your level of stress is impacting your well-being, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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